

**SOMALI WOMEN IN LONDON:
EDUCATION AND GENDER RELATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the impact of education levels on the social changes experienced by Somali women migrants to Britain, in particular attitudes towards changes in gender relations. The original hypothesis was that the higher the level of education the greater the degree of empowerment, other research and policy having linked education to women's autonomy and emancipation. Somali women in general have low levels of education and most did not speak English upon arrival in Britain. A sample of 50 Somali women aged from 16 to over 50 with a variety of education levels ranging from no formal education to higher education levels was selected and studied using a variety of qualitative methods. These included participant observation within the community by attending social events; group interviews; and in-depth interviews conducted in Somali and English using a semi-structured questionnaire.

During the study the following areas were explored: gender equality, education, employment, marriage, divorce, health, housing, immigration, social security, religion, culture, and the family. Somalis are Muslims and their lifestyle is influenced by Islam especially in the areas of gender relations, marriage and divorce.

The study found that contrary to the original hypothesis, Somali women with higher education levels had a more conservative approach to gender equality and women's empowerment than less educated women. All the women believed education could provide a route to skilled employment and empowerment. The educated women gave more credence to the Somali community's perceptions of their behaviour and followed religious precepts on gender relations rather than the pursuit of their own empowerment and autonomy. Women with less education felt able to file for divorce if their husbands were not living up to their part of the marriage contract. The key finding was that economic independence rather than level of education was the main key to women's empowerment.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

My interest in Somali women's education and training started in 1979 during my first visit to Somalia. I lived in Somalia for three years and I learnt to speak Somali. I took up a teaching post at the Somali National University as a Lecturer in French and English. It was the strength of the blend of old and new which really fascinated me. Nomadic women in rural areas were able to eke out a living as their mothers and grandmothers had done before them. Women in urban areas came to my class in Mogadishu to learn, to debate and to discuss, some wearing jeans and some traditional Somali dress.

When I visited London in 1984, I met some members of the Somali community in East London. The Somali women I met then had lived in Britain for up to thirty years and their British born children were grown up. Many of these women were married at an early age in Somalia and most had not attended school. It was not a priority for families to educate girls in Northern Somalia in the 1950s and 1960s (Laurence, 1963). The Somali women who came to Britain in the 1960s obviously missed the literacy campaign that took place in Somalia in the mid-1970s. Neither were they there when the Somali language was first written in the Roman script during the same period.

When I returned to live in Britain in 1987, the Somali community in East London had increased substantially, by several thousand. The number of people seeking political asylum from the conflict in Somalia had grown. Then, after the start of the Somali Civil War in 1988, several thousand Somali asylum seekers fled to Britain. There are now very large Somali communities all around Britain, with the largest groups concentrated in London. For example, between 8 - 10,000 Somalis are estimated to live in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (El Solh, 1991). The majority of these arrived after the start of the civil war in 1988. The newcomers have included women and children who were not accompanied by their husbands and fathers. Many Somali men and women were killed, tortured and imprisoned during the civil war. Many men stayed behind, as they were involved in the fighting and they sent their families to seek asylum in Europe. This led to my interest in assessing whether the women's thirst for knowledge and education had survived the civil war and the refugee flight

to Britain in the 1990s. I wanted to see whether they had been able to access the education and training facilities available in Britain, because most of the women came to Britain unable to speak English and the majority had very low literacy levels.

In this study I consider how Somali women coped with living in Britain, which has an entirely different culture and infrastructure than Somalia. Within the community I had observed aspects of social change occurring among some women. I noticed the push and pull of cultural adaptation and protectionism. This included the desire to hold on to the familiar culture and traditions that the women knew, and the inevitable struggle to learn a new language that brings with it a whole new set of cultural norms and values. I was keen to find out whether women with different levels of literacy had experienced changes in gender relations and changed their views on gender equality.

I was interested in access to education because I was a lecturer in Somalia and I also taught Somali women in adult education classes in Britain. The plethora of education and training provision available in London led to my interest in assessing participation rates of Somali women. The education providers are the local education authorities, further education colleges, and the voluntary sector. The types of provision are adult education classes, English as a Second Language, access courses, literacy and numeracy classes etc. There were also the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE) programmes, with classes in office skills, computing, clerical and administrative work. These classes were organised for the unemployed, some were set up for refugees, and there was some women only provision. Education and training classes are often funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and other grants, and organised by voluntary sector training agencies for Black, migrant and refugee women. These classes were designed so that they would receive skills, which would enable them to seek employment.

The background and the context in which Somali women live are important in order to understand how they view and access education. I recorded data from Somali volunteers working in Somali community centres that stated that if a course did not have some financial inducements, such as child care allowances and travel fares, then it would not attract many Somali women. My first thoughts when told this were that the women had children, and low incomes and genuinely required their child care costs reimbursed. Then I began to think

about what the take up rates would be if the courses were free, during school hours, with a crèche and within walking distance of their home. Motivational factors that play a role in education and training take up needed also to be examined. Peer pressure, media, self-esteem, culture, gender roles, mental and physical health might also play a part in Somali women's access to training and education provision.

The context of Somali women's low educational achievement and low levels of literacy can be found in the educational set up in Somalia during the colonial period up to the present times. This is discussed in chapter 4 on Somalia. However, in Somalia before the civil war, the enrolment of girls in primary education had increased significantly up to the mid-1980s. The government believed in providing universal free primary education for all Somali children. The girls who lived in towns benefited from this government education policy due to the proximity of schools. However, although primary education was free, the school uniform, books and stationery had to be purchased. Education was viewed with suspicion during the colonial times and more attention was paid to educating children, especially boys, in Arabic and the Koran (Ruhela, 1993). This thesis explores changes in gender relations and expectations among Somali families in the UK.

When I started this study, my hypothesis was that the higher the level of education, the greater the degree of change in attitudes to life options and gender equality. However, I found that participants with higher education levels had more traditional and conservative attitudes and participants with low literacy levels more 'progressive' attitudes towards life options and gender relations.¹ I shall endeavour to explain why.

The structure of the study is as follows. Chapter 2 examines the existing literature on migration, gender, education, religion and the family which is relevant to an understanding of Somali women in London. Chapter 3 considers the research design for this qualitative

¹ The life options in this study refer to: choice of when and whom to marry, divorce, sexual freedom, freedom of movement, access to education, household power, access to information and economic independence. (Blumberg, 1975)

study. Chapter 4 focuses on women's life in Somalia because most Somalis in Britain are recent migrants and refugees. Chapter 5 examines the household and family and takes a look at Somali marriage, divorce, sexuality, freedom of movement and the division of labour and resources and household decision making. Religion plays a large role in Somali women's lives and its effects on their life are explored in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 examines how Somali women's lives are affected by government legislation, so immigration, welfare rights, the police, housing, health and access to information on education are covered. Somali women's experience of the labour market and how gender relations are affected by a woman's access to an income are examined in Chapter 8. A main concern in this study is education and as mentioned above the issue of access to education and training, and how education levels affect a Somali woman's ability to pursue her life options. This is considered particularly in Chapter 9, but is also a thread running throughout. This study concludes in chapter 10 with an overview of the research findings and the way forward.

Chapter 2

EXISTING WORK RELEVANT TO SOMALI WOMEN

This chapter reviews the literature on a series of topics relevant to understanding Somali women in London: migration, welfare rights and citizenship; Somali culture; education of migrants and refugees; feminist work on employment, family and education; Islam and patriarchy, identity and diaspora. Such a wide literature search was undertaken because although there was a dearth of specific literature on Somalis, there is a whole range of other literature that touches on relevant topics.

A number of writers have also drawn attention to the scarcity of studies about Somalis in Britain (El-Solh, 1993; Sales and Gregory, 1998; Summerfield, 1993; Somali Women's Association, 1987). There is a handbook on Somali refugee children in Britain (Kahin, 1997) and occasional reference to Somalis in the literature on British immigration and refugees (e.g. Shutter, 1997). There is reference to Somali women in the literature on female genital mutilation (Dorkenoo and Elworthy, 1994), but there are very few in-depth studies of this practice in any group. The few studies that do exist on Somalis in Britain include El-Solh's (1993) study on Somali Muslim women in East London renegotiating their gender and ethno-religious identity; Summerfield's (1993) work based on a comparison of patterns of adaptation of East London Bangladeshi and Somali women; and Sales and Gregory's (1998) study on the resettlement experiences of Somali women refugees living in London and the extent to which gendered roles had been reinforced or renegotiated in exile.

The literature reviewed in this chapter covers all the areas that may affect a migrant's settlement in Britain. First, a migrant or refugee woman who enters Britain will have to apply for asylum and residency. She will then look for a community to engage with at the interpersonal level. She will have to look for a place to live and for work or a source of income. For most Somali women, the community involves religion and they may seek other Muslims to enhance the depth of Islamic values and principles in their daily lives. Her identity needs to be reinforced through family and friends to stave off isolation and to counter racism. The need to communicate with the outside world may lead her to find adult

education classes. She may learn English and other skills to improve her employment prospects.

2.1 Migration, Welfare Rights and Citizenship

2.1.1 Refugees

The 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as: 'a person who has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion...' (United Nations, 1951). However, since gender is not usually recognised as a category of persecution for refugees, women fleeing gender-specific persecution, such as rape, refusal to wear the veil and arranged marriage, do not have protection. Canada recognised a specific persecution affecting a woman for the first time in 1990 (Bhabha and Shutter, 1994). Britain, as a signatory to the Convention, can decide on the criteria it uses to define who qualifies as a refugee and what proof is necessary. Generally, refugees must satisfy the government that they have a genuine fear for their safety. The Home Office bases its decision on information it has about the situation in different countries. The refugee's credibility when the fear of persecution cannot be substantiated by sufficient proof is the basis for the Home Office's decision. 'Evidence' is then vital, because the assessment of a person's credibility is often negative, especially a woman's.

Very few asylum seekers are granted full refugee status and the majority are granted 'exceptional leave to remain' (ELR) (Bhabha and Shutter, 1994). ELR status has serious implications for refugees' rights. People with full refugee status have an immediate entitlement to family reunion with their spouse and minor children, and other dependants such as aged parents and siblings if they were living in the same household as the refugee before separation. But in practice most elderly parents and other relatives are not granted family reunion, except in the most exceptional compassionate circumstances. Asylum seekers with ELR have to wait years for family reunion, often with tragic consequences (Bhabha and Shutter, 1994). The harmonisation of European immigration law, asylum policy, external border controls and immigration policy for third country nationals who are legally or illegally

within European territory, have further restricted the movement of asylum seekers and refugees within Europe (Bhabha and Shutter, 1994).

Sue Shutter's work shows how the difficulties Somalis have had in obtaining family reunion have resulted in the fragmentation and break-up of many Somali refugee families, with children not seeing their fathers or mothers for several years. She states however that the Home Office operated a concession for the Somali family members in Somalia or refugee camps in Ethiopia who could not travel to a British embassy to apply for entry clearance from 1988 until 28 January 1994 (Shutter, 1997). This concession allowed the sponsors in Britain to apply for entry clearance and to supply the necessary documents and the Home Office would inform the British embassy. This made it easier for displaced people to join their families, but this concession was withdrawn in 1994 when the British government felt it was safe for people to travel again. When entry was refused to applicants for family reunion, there was no right of appeal unless the family made another visa application from abroad and then appealed when it was unsuccessful. Family members of asylum seekers who reach Britain and make an application have to explain that they are coming to join an asylum seeker and may be given temporary admission. In that case they may be allowed to stay until a decision has been made on their relative's asylum case. However, there is no automatic right of entry for them at British airports or ports and they may be refused entry. Their next step would be to make an asylum application in their own right (Shutter, 1997).

2.1.2 Welfare Rights

It is important to examine the gendered relationship which characterises the connection between women and welfare because there are high numbers of refugee and asylum-seeking families headed by women, and in Britain the majority of refugee women depend on the state social welfare system for their maintenance (Millar, 1996). Welfare policies have disproportionately benefited the middle classes and men, as most social policies are first and foremost family policies based on a gender divided nuclear family system and heterosexual couples. The income support system for example is based on the concept that families have one main breadwinner and that married women have access to the family income. The couple is the unit of assessment. The (outdated) model of women staying at home and

providing service to men and children has also historically shaped the British government's approach to childcare. As a consequence many Somali women with children often register separately as lone mothers for their immigration status even if they have long-term male partners, and it is also beneficial for their income support.

Feminist arguments for gender equality and changes in social policy approaches (Wilson, 1977; Oakley, 1987; Pascall, 1997) have been hindered by the rising costs of health and welfare services and cutbacks in public spending. Many women are dependant on the state rather than men. The state is patriarchal in nature but without the emotions of romantic sexual love to mitigate financial struggles between men and women. The feminist perspective of the 1970s argued for the state's construction of women in social policy to be that of citizens. The advent of community care saw the restructuring of welfare to replace public with voluntary provision. Welfare policy and gender equality are compatible but they need to be prioritised together.

A further negative factor is the 'Black cultural pathology' : the application of stereotypes to explain the disproportionately higher levels of Black people living in poverty, inadequate housing, poor health status and Black educational underachievement (Nasir, 1996). This pathologising ignores structural, class and other inequalities and persists in the notions that Black people have dysfunctional families and cultures that produce and reproduce poor conditions. Nasir's critique of social policy demonstrates the prevalence of racism generally and the lack of emphasis given to race also in feminist social policy analysis. People whose legal status is insecure will have problems securing and maintaining paid employment.

2.1.3 Legal Status

UK immigration laws place restrictions on family reunion for refugees, migrants and British passport holders, which can affect the very fabric of their lives. The lack of family reunion alone can lead to family break up, single carer families and stress. The racialisation of immigration policies has been noted (Lutz, 1994) but their effects on women has been less reflected in the literature on migration (Shutter, 1997). This literature does not examine in any depth the migration experiences of women as it is assumed that women are dependants

of men ((Allen, 1971; Lawrence, 1974; Parekh, 1974; Panayi, 1993; Robinson, 1993; Richmond, 1994). There are concerns in the feminist literature on women and citizenship about the effects of nationality and immigration legislation on excluding many women from enjoying full rights as citizens (Bhabha and Shutter, 1994). In addition, there are very few studies that focus empirically on the experiences of refugee women (Julian, 1997). The government's immigration policies clearly have favoured white nuclear families. The process of keeping Black immigration to the minimum has effectively meant that even though women were regarded as dependants, Black wives trying to join their husbands in Britain faced many hurdles (Bhabha and Shutter, 1994).

Such a process of immigration control is itself the product of and in turn reconstructs Eurocentric ideology. This is demonstrated in the premise on which frameworks and immigration rules are constructed, while the models used to extract information through immigration interviews is itself constructed by these practices. It is also seen in the questions posed, language used and interpretations made to obtain the information (Cheney, 1993). There is an unequal power relationship, and the image of the applicant is based on ethnocentric assumptions, stereotypes and expectations. These assumptions are inherent in the unequal power of the legislators, officials and those legislated against. The treatment of women under immigration control highlights how women are essentialised as mothers; and moreover the particular dominant ideology of motherhood. There is little acceptance of cultural differences in gender roles and definitions of parenting. Stereotypes of 'Asian mothers', 'refugee women' etc led to discrimination.

Since 1971, restrictions on the entry of Black people (by separating families) have controlled the size of the Black population (Bhat et al, 1988). This was also achieved by classifying women as 'dependants' of men and saying women therefore could not bring over their own 'dependants' (until 1985), but British born men could bring in Indian wives. British born Asian women could not bring their husbands from India and Pakistan because the immigration service viewed these men as not dependants and the marriages as 'arranged' and not 'genuine'. Even where the immigration service was satisfied the couple have co-habited and the marriage was 'genuine', the couple still had to prove that the 'primary purpose' of the marriage was not immigration before the husband can be allowed in to the UK. Since

1985, when British women were granted the right to pass on British nationality to their foreign born husbands, refugee and migrant families, especially families headed by women, have still been disadvantaged due to the rules surrounding family reunion. These immigration rules state that a 'sponsor' must be able to maintain and accommodate the family without access to public funds or state housing. This policy has resulted in men, women and children aged over 18 not being able to join their families in Britain, if their families rely on state benefits for support (Shutter, 1997).

The sex and racial discriminatory impact of the law, and the specific disadvantages and humiliations suffered by Black women due to the interaction of racism and sexism, have been documented before, but mainly in relation to Asian women seeking entry to the UK, and mainly in the 1970s when as fiancées or daughters they were subjected to humiliating sexual examinations (Wilson, 1978; Bhabha and Shutter, 1994). These internal medical procedures were used to check for communicable diseases and it was also noted in the medical report if the woman was a virgin or not. This evidence was then used in making a decision about the relationship of the wife to her husband. White women were not subjected to these examinations when entering Britain (Bhabha, Klug and Shutter, 1985). These practices stopped after much protest and no longer take place. But beyond this there has been little publicity given to the interaction of racism and sexism in migration experiences.

Even after the 1981 British Nationality Act, a spouse (wife or husband) has to live in Britain for three years before they can apply for British nationality on the basis of marriage. Also the 1988 Immigration Act made it impossible for more than one wife of a polygamous marriage to join her husband in Britain. The British husband would have to divorce his first wife in order for the second wife to apply to enter Britain as a fiancée. This woman would then have to get married under British law to enable her to apply to remain as a wife in Britain (Bhabha and Shutter, 1994).

The external life of all refugees is thus strongly shaped by the policies of the state. The internal life of each community is also influenced by its specific culture and how this interfaces with British cultures. The specific experience of Somalis is the concern of the next section.

2.1.4 Somali Migration

There has been a Somali community¹ in Britain for several decades, in fact since the late 19th century (Little, 1948; Collins, 1957). There were substantial increases in the 1960s and again with the start of the Somali civil war in 1988. The estimated population of Somalis in Britain is now 60,000 with the highest concentrations found in the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham and Ealing (Kahin, 1997). Most Somalis in Britain are refugees whose entry and settlement in the UK is governed by legislation and policies, which affect their lives in different ways.

Sales and Gregory (1998) interviewed twenty Somali refugee women living in London in a small-scale study in early 1997. They had built up contacts with these women over the years when they had been studying the resettlement needs of refugees. They worked with two Somali women who were respected in their community. These women acted as interpreters and they introduced the researchers to their interviewees. The point of introduction to the community is important because of the sensitive subject matter, the women's insecure residence status, and their mistrust of outsiders.

Sales and Gregory (1998) note that Somali refugee women who were qualified professionals in Somalia do not have the resources to undertake the necessary additional qualifications and training in Britain. There is however an urgent need for Somali speaking nurses, social workers and teachers. Overseas qualifications are not however recognised and conversion courses are too expensive for most asylum seekers who do not qualify for home fees unless they have lived in the UK for three years. Sales and Gregory found some Somali women felt that Britain provided them with opportunities to learn new skills through access to education and training. However, uncertainty about their legal status and their hope of returning to Somalia made long-term education and training plans difficult to make. The authors make the point that there is an urgent need for a comprehensive strategy for the resettlement of refugees in Britain (Sales and Gregory, 1998).

1. These early Somali migrants to Britain were merchant Seamen enlisted in the British Navy.

Kaptejns' (1994) study on gender and clan identity also raises some important points. It argues that Somali women are beginning to define new identities in Britain but they are still affected by the clan-based politics of their homeland, but not fully included:

As lists of the casualties of the fighting in Mogadishu and other parts of the country began circulating in the Somali community in London, I was struck by the fact that the names of women were *not* included. (Kaptejns 1994:213)

The civil war in Somalia has been based on clan identity. Thousands of Somalis were killed during the military regime of Siad Barre and the civil war. Kaptejns argues, in an analysis of gender in the cultural construction of the Somali community identity, that women are second-rank members of clans in a patriarchal society. Women's positions and contributions are devalued by the current constructions of Somali community identity. She defines clan as 'a community of agnatically (related on the father's side) related men', and further states that women at birth are temporary members of their father's household, and that after marriage a woman gains 'outsider status in the household of her husband' (Kaptejns, 1994:213).

Kaptejns' contribution is important because she argues that the clan is socially constructed and not inherited from the pre-colonial period. She states that it was a construction from the times of independence within the context of capitalism and patriarchy. The clan issue further serves to reinforce women's lower status in the community because children belong to their father's clan. Clan identity is very important for Somalis, and women, men and children have been imprisoned, tortured, raped and killed during and after the war because of their clan identity (Bhabha and Shutter, 1994). Somali women have however been conspicuously absent from what is stressed as being essential aspects of Somali culture.

According to Hassan et al (1995), Somali people have a rich oral heritage, which is expressed through poetry, dance and drama. Women are however not included in the ranks of great Somali poets and orators. There is evidence however that Somali nomadic feminists did express protests through poetry, song and lullabies. These women also formed informal networks, kinship groups and religious associations to enable them to fight gender oppression. The Somali language was written in an agreed orthography in 1972, prior to this,

the colonial languages English and Italian were used for administrative purposes and very few written records exist of any Somali literature, and certainly not women's literature. The egalitarian nature of Somali society meant that women from different social and economic backgrounds could mix freely without feeling self-conscious; and Somali women's literature contains themes of grievances: daily problems, protests against domestic violence, anti-colonialism, oppression and subjugation. Somali women thus have their own forms of literary genre and poetic forms of expression but women's poetry has been researched only through oral history. Somali men poets, on the other hand depict women as passive and obedient in 'their' poems. An assertive woman is seen as deviant and uncontrollable. Somali women's poetry around the struggle for independence portrayed an opportunity to throw off the shackles of oppression brought about by tribalism and male domination.

Another important study of identity has been the work of El-Solh (1993), which examined Somali women's gender and ethno-religious identity. In her study, El-Solh used 'prototypes' of different types of Somali women to provide an insight into how they dealt with the pressures of trying to negotiate their ethno-religious identities in the East End of London. These prototypes were similar to case studies, each being an amalgamation of characteristics from different individuals to represent the experiences of a range of Somali women she encountered during her fieldwork. She also used these examples to preserve the anonymity of her respondents. For example, there is the seaman's wife with very little literacy who came to Britain in the 1960s; there is the British born second generation Somali woman who finished her secondary education; and the Somali women who came from Somalia as asylum seekers after 1988.

El-Solh identified certain continuities and changes. Some women had not changed their traditional gender roles. Others had adapted to changes and ignored the criticism of traditionalists, but did not do anything that would have resulted in their being socially ostracised. She found that the majority of Somali women living in the East End of London were content with their religious and ethnic identity, which separated them from mainstream British society. But the author concluded her study by stating that there were a few cases of women in her study who had crossed the morally accepted boundaries. As an example she gave a Somali woman living with a white Christian man.

My study will also take an in-depth look at gender relations within the family, and will uncover any changes that have affected traditional gender roles in the Somali community. But it goes beyond the work of El-Solh (1993) because it critically examines issues like education, work, immigration, household power and access to economic independence and information. In El-Solh's study she found that Somali women were keen to attend Koranic School to improve their knowledge of the Koran and Islamic studies. They wanted to reinforce their religious practice and observation and to pass it on to their children. But many women realised also that they were not going to get well-paid skilled jobs with their lack of English and qualifications. So although they wanted to pass on their culture, language and religion to their children, they also enrolled them in the British State education system, which had a Christian ethos. Young women (unlike their brothers) were taught at home how to cook, and look after the house in a Somali fashion, since being a wife and mother were very important roles in traditional Somali culture. These ascribed gender roles meant that higher education was not regarded as appropriate (El-Solh, 1993). But on the whole, Somali women in Britain felt that education and training were desirable for young women, so long as it did not take them away from their culture and religion.

There are a few studies on Somalis resident in other western countries. Affi (1997) reports on the problems Somali single mothers face in adapting to life in Canada. This work notes extremely high divorce rates within the Somali community, and identifies the redefinition of traditional cultural roles between men and women, and the stress of settling down in a foreign country as all contributory factors. Somali men in Canada do not contribute to household chores despite the absence of the extended family members who previously used to do some household chores in Somalia. Language and skills barriers mean Somali women are engaged in low paid menial and unskilled jobs.

Utteh is a Somali scholar who provides a male perspective on the social problems of Somalis in Germany and lays the blame on the women. His work (Utteh, 1997) outlines the social problems Somali families face, and the loss of Somali culture. The problems include an increase in alcoholism, suicides, mental health problems, family break-ups and the chewing

of khat². Other family related issues include men's inability to control the movement of women (wives and daughters), wives having European boyfriends, and children losing their language, religion and culture. Utteh argues that Somali refugees are not being integrated successfully into mainstream Germany society, even though many are losing their Somali culture. He believes there should be a mass repatriation of Somalis to Somalia. Grants and loans to Somali business people, professionals and farmers should be part of this strategy to ensure a successful transition and re-integration with Somali society. Utteh's work does not look at gender apart from criticising the perils of gender equality and the problems caused by Somali women's increased freedom of movement from patriarchal traditions and culture.

All the past work on Somalis has suffered from certain shortcomings, either lack of trust, language barriers or being done by men. My current work shares being an African, a woman, a Muslim and I speak Somali. I am also a member of the community through marriage and in my study the focus is on gender. The next section considers Somali culture.

2.2 Somali Culture

An understanding of the socio-cultural background in Somalia is obviously essential for this study and is covered in more detail in chapter four. I have drawn primarily on the work on Somali history, politics, culture and the refugee situation by I M Lewis, (Lewis, 1961; Lewis, 1980; Lewis, 1981; Lewis, 1993; Lewis, 1994) based on anthropological research conducted in the 1950s and 1960s. There are updates in recent editions of his work on the war and the current socio-cultural and political situation. However, I found women invisible in the works of Lewis except as mothers and wives and in relation to the cultural institutions, marriage, inheritance and divorce. There are also some studies about the contemporary Somali political situation, (e.g. Samatar, 1988) and texts on the war, (e.g. Amnesty International, 1988), but these give little attention to women and gender. Ntiri's (1987) work is specifically on family planning in Somalia and the inclusion of Somalis in work on female genital mutilation. Her (1987) survey of women in Somalia reported that family planning was practised by 83 per cent of her sample. But 79 per cent used breastfeeding as the only means of family planning.

2 A shrub of East Africa, Arabia etc, the leaves are chewed or taken as tea for its stimulant effect.

Three per cent of women used respite from the marital home and the husband as a means of sexual control. Even in urban areas only one per cent were using the pill, coil or rhythm method. Childbearing could start at age 12 or 15 and continue for the next 20 to 25 years. The Somali woman today is more likely to have her first child at the age of twenty. Ntiri reported that 62 per cent of Somali women respondents saw themselves as foremost a mother and a wife (Ntiri, 1987).

What is certain is that the family is an important part of society in Somalia, and a Somali woman's life is geared towards the family as her main achievement. The Somalis have an extended and patriarchal family system. The husband is considered the head of the family and he is responsible for maintaining and protecting his wife, children and other household members (who may be sisters, cousins, mothers, nieces, nephews and other relatives). The extended family type is common among Somalis and derives from their traditional life as pastoral nomads (60 per cent of the Somali population of around 5 million engage in nomadic activities, UNESCO, 1977.) This is reflected in the communal way of life, where families are interdependent and where many hands are needed in the maintenance of a nomadic lifestyle. Hitherto, many men have migrated to search for employment, business and education. This is demonstrated by the Somalis who migrated to Britain as seamen in the early to mid-twentieth century and who settled in cities near ports such as Cardiff, East London, Hull and Liverpool (El-Solh, 1993). Their wives and families would stay behind in Somalia with the support and care of the family of the migrant and the wife's own family (Lewis, 1960). Most Somali families have large numbers of children who are needed to support the pastoral and nomadic lifestyle.

Karl (1995) found that women in general who are educated are more likely to use contraception for family planning and to have smaller families than uneducated women. Marriage is a major milestone in a Somali woman's life and a virgin bride is the norm. Female circumcision (Female Genital Cutting - FGC) or female genital mutilation (FGM)

as it is known in the literature is the method most widely used to ensure a woman's virginity is preserved until her marriage.

Female circumcision is wide spread in Somalia and the most common types are infibulation and clitoridectomy. Over 80 per cent of Somali born women have undergone some form of circumcision (Hosken, 1993). Many women believe (erroneously) that female circumcision is a practice required by Islam, but female circumcision is not part of the teaching of the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Many Muslim cultures do however practice FGM and it has found its way into Islamic traditions. The emphasis on virginity is however pre-Islamic and it has more to do with patriarchal tribal customs than with Islam (Al-Hibri, 1982).

The literature on FGM focuses on the medical effects and on political campaigns to eradicate the practice. The common western ethnocentric analytical model represents third world women as a homogenous group oppressed by male dominated societies and sexist cultures. Third world women are also defined as victims of various oppressions in many feminist discourses: as victims of male violence, victims of Islamic society or victims of colonialism (Ramazanoglu, 1989). I feel it is important to look at the meaning of female circumcision (and also motherhood and family planning) from Somali women's perspective. In doing so my study can make a contribution to a better understanding of female circumcision and the lives of Muslim women refugees. So far, many studies assume that the lives of Muslim women in Britain are only dominated by purdah, the veil and male dominance (Mohanty 1991).

Kahin (1997), in a study of Somali children in Britain, found evidence that the rate of female circumcision has decreased in Britain among Africans because it has been declared illegal since the Female Circumcision Act 1985. Under the Children Act 1989, female circumcision has been incorporated into child protection procedures and child health surveillance among health authorities and local authority social services departments (Dorkenoo and Elworthy, 1994). However, there are still some Somali women in Britain who send their daughters to the Middle East or to Somalia for circumcision, or arrange to have it done in secret in Britain (Summerfield, 1993). Most Somali girls born in Britain are not being circumcised. From

my knowledge in the community there are about five percent of girls who are being circumcised. It is not talked about, but two of my participants have had their British born daughters circumcised overseas. This thesis will attempt to explain why and why the majority have changed their minds about female circumcision.

2.3 Ethnicity and Racism

With very little on Somalis as a whole, I also drew on studies of refugees, Muslim and Black and ethnic minority communities in Britain to highlight and to examine their experiences of life, notably of racism, cultural assimilation, education and religion in Britain, including works which only make a passing reference to Somalis (e.g. Modood, 1997; Bhabha and Shutter, 1994).

2.3.1 Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a policy that acknowledges that Britain is made up of many cultures and ethnic groups. It is often contrasted with anti-racism that involves opposition to prejudice and persecution on grounds of race and support for policies that promote equality among and tolerance between groups of different racial origins. Both are important policy areas that others have explored (Troyna and Williams, 1986) and are threaded through the government's educational programmes (including the funding of refugee training programmes) and voluntary sector grants since the 1980s. Critics of multiculturalism in the education arena criticised its failure to deal with power relations within the arena of institutional racism (Carby, 1982).

'Multiculturalism' and 'anti-racism' are best seen as major 'sets of discourses; modes of analysis; state policies and practice; and political identities' (Brah, 1996:233) because of their adoption by left of centre English local authorities. It is important for the analysis of multiculturalism and racism that relationships between modalities of power are examined. Social transformation should go beyond the reconstruction of structural relations. Multiculturalist discourse reached a stalemate because of the failure to include debates on the changing power relations and structures inherent in racist discourses and anti-racism. This

came to a head in the ways in which religion, and in particular Islam, became racialised in the post-Rushdie³ period in Britain and elsewhere in Europe. Salman Rushdie's novel The Satanic Verses was regarded as blasphemous against the Prophet Mohammed. The novel was banned in many Muslim countries and Muslims staged street demonstrations in protest against the author and his novel. Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran issued a 'fatwa' or death sentence against Salman Rushdie. The author was forced to seek police protection and live at a secret address for over 10 years. The racism in Britain against Blacks became voiced as critiques of Islam and anti-Muslim.

2.3.2 Race and Religion

In 1989 during the aftermath of the Rushdie affair the term 'fundamentalism' was popularised and distorted. All Muslims were regarded as fanatical extremists and were assumed to be ultra orthodox, especially by the tabloid press, and labelled as 'mad mullahs' (Maitland, 1992). Similarly Muslim women who were identifiable by their mode of dress and racial origins were liable to be insulted and assaulted in public.

The anti-Muslim racism put Muslims on the defensive about their culture and religion. But certain groups of Muslims turned the tide to advance their own causes. For example, Muslims made demands to extend the blasphemy laws and for equal rights within a pluralist society and Christian state. The momentum for state support for separate Muslim schools was also stepped up at this period (1989) to articulate an Islamic position and to capitalise on the support Muslims received from left wing local authorities and their multicultural policies (Khanum, 1992; Ali, 1992).

In the wake of the Rushdie affair Muslim men believed strongly that they had to protect Muslim women against ungodly characters like Salman Rushdie (despite his being born a Muslim). So Muslim women found themselves being morally policed by Muslim men. The women themselves feared assault by racist elements in their local communities, but they also felt restrictions on their movements by Muslim men who believed they were protecting them.

3. Salman Rushdie is an Indian born author who wrote the novel the "Satanic Verses" which was viewed as blasphemous by Muslims.

2.3.3 Cultural Assimilation and Cultural Resistance

There is also work on issues of assimilation, boundary maintenance, and culture that is relevant to understanding Somali culture and its changes in Britain. A central theme of work within this area has been the issue of cultural assimilation when a non-indigenous culture co-exists within an indigenous one. Cultural assimilation concerns the adoption of values and behaviour of the 'host society' (Gordon, 1964). Pluralism is concerned with the building and retention of ethnic identity and community values (Gold, 1992). This distinction can be illustrated within the United States of America (USA), where Gordon argues cultural assimilation has occurred but not large-scale structural assimilation. Some identifiable groupings in the USA remain various religious, racial and ethnic groups: the Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Irish, Italian, Hispanic, African and Asian Americans.

There are several issues that affect the degree of assimilation of migrant groups and these include religion and language. Elkholy (1966) studied Arab Muslims in the USA and argued that when religion is closely linked to nationality or race, it reinforces group identity and weakens the links to the new culture. Language is an important aspect of communication and the language spoken at home is a factor in levels of assimilation. Elkholy found that 'the first generation speaks in Arabic, but the second generation answers in English' (Elkholy, 1966:88). He found changes of attitudes towards traditional customs were another measure of levels of assimilation, and that education was a harbinger of social change. The difference in educational attainment between the generations was responsible for conflict within the community. Elkholy's study also found the authority of fathers was challenged by their children. The patriarchal family structure with the father at the head was breaking down.

Kunz's work on the type of relationships between refugees and their homeland shows their effects on levels of integration into the host community's culture (Kunz, 1981 cited in Al-Rasheed, 1994). Refugees who identify enthusiastically with their home country prefer to stay separate. Refugees who are 'event-alienated' and indifferent or embittered towards their country (for example, religious or marginalised ethnic minorities who were discriminated

against by the majority population), or self-alienated refugees (who have personal or political reasons for exile) have no wish to identify with their nation and they are assimilated more rapidly. Somalis are an instance of a group that wants to cling to their cultural and religious values and many of them harbour the (unrealistic) hope of returning home (El Solh, 1993).

Britain, although predominantly a Christian country in ethos if not belief, has a multi-faith plurality and different faith groups have been living side-by-side for generations. There are distinct Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim communities in Britain which have maintained their own languages, diet, dress and customs for generations. There is therefore not a homogenous British society or way of life into which people can be absorbed. As Jeffrey (1976) argued, there are divisions in British society along regional differences, class, education and religious lines.

2.4 Gender, the Family and Work

Delphy and Leonard's (1992) theoretical framework on production and consumption in families and its construction of gender in the family, was developed in relation to western families, but I shall use it to explore changes in migrant family structures within a western society. This macro-sociological approach to the analysis of the western family acknowledges that there is a hierarchy of production, distribution and consumption within families and that rules of kinship and marriage underpin the economic relationships within the family.

Delphy and Leonard (1992) state that the type of work undertaken by family members depends upon gender, age and marital status. Wives have their sexual, productive and emotional labour exploited by their husbands. Men and adolescents who are engaged in waged labour outside the home are in general not obliged to undertake domestic labour. Delphy and Leonard stress that although many married women work in paid employment outside the home, women's labour is still used full-time or part-time within the household. They have access to greater financial independence but they still undertake the bulk of household work. Employed unmarried women have greater independence but a lower standard of living, the same levels of household work and their status as single women is

regarded as problematic in social terms. Women face inequality in the division of labour in the home and this can impact on their ability to access education and their life chances. In the next section I look at how women fare in the labour market because many migrant women are engaged in paid employment.

2.4. 1 Gender and the Labour Market

Research into gender and the labour market has revealed that the process of industrialisation produced a gendered division of labour that had two main features. One was the male breadwinner/dependant housewife model, which while often more an ideal than an empirical reality meant that men's wages were higher, and households without men were usually poor, and that men worked long hours outside the home. The second feature was that men and women were gender segregated in employment: concentrated in different jobs, occupations, and places of work (Reskin and Padavic, 1994). Feminist analyses of women and the labour market have been a core part of theoretical approaches of the work on patriarchy (Walby, 1990), and have also stressed class, 'race' and gender divisions in paid work (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). The focus on the feminisation and the racialisation of work has led to studies on the impact of part-time work on women and the position of Black women in the labour market. The theoretical paradigms shaping the feminist analyses of women's paid employment have, however, in the last ten years shifted from the 'production paradigm' to those linked with post-structuralist and post-modernist feminisms. This has meant that some theoretical approaches have moved away from labour and production towards a focus on culture, identity and consumption (Witz, 1997). Both approaches are however useful for analysing the experiences of migrant women workers.

Mies (1989:37) referred to the concept of *capitalist-patriarchy*⁴ when discussing the system that maintains women's exploitation and oppression. According to Anthias (1983), migrant women often experienced the extension of patriarchal relations from the family to the work place. For example, many Somali women work in Turkish, Greek and Asian owned factories and hotels and in Somali owned restaurants and shops where the management is male and

⁴ The system which maintains women's exploitation and oppression. Patriarchy is the rule of fathers, husbands and of male bosses. The goal of capitalism is the process of accumulation of capital which cannot be achieved unless

most of the workers are women. By extension then, the dominance of men at home is being replicated and even extended to the workplace. Among the women factory workers she studied, most of whom were from Black and ethnic minority communities, there were also hierarchies of oppression based on ethnicity and class. Mies (1989) argues that if the aim of feminism was to overcome women's exploitation and oppression, then it has to struggle against all capitalist-patriarchal relationships.

Adkins (1995) has looked at women's exploitation in paid work which is organised and controlled by patriarchal structuring of waged labour. For example, many women working in the hotel and catering sector are subjected to sexual exploitation by men customers **and** by men co-workers when carrying out their work. Adkins' study has contributed to feminist literature on the labour market by demonstrating the sexualised as well as the gendered structure of the labour market. There are many migrant women who are engaged in domestic work, family run hotel and catering businesses, who have to cope with men customers' advances, or appeared interested in their conversation, as well as cook, clean and wash up. Many of these women are directly sexually harassed or worse.

There is also work on the 'ethnic economy' of small clothing and retail outlets run by male migrants, which relies upon the exploitation of family and relatives in particular women and children. In the literature, the 'ethnic economy' is seen as 'providing employment opportunities' for migrant women who are disadvantaged by language, culture and literacy within the wider labour market. However, in reality, migrant women provide cheap labour in industries created by migrant men. Migrant men also experience exploitation by ethnic employers; however, the sexualised division of labour has meant that men have greater opportunities than women to accumulate capital through working long hours. They also have more chance of establishing their own small businesses because they can use their wives' and children's labour and use the accumulated capital to move into small-scale business (Anthias, 1983).

patriarchal man-woman relationships are maintained (Mies, 1989:37)

Black women are thus concentrated in particular sectors of British industry even within the overall gendered division of the labour market. Virtually the only jobs open to them are in clothing, food manufacture, catering, transport, cleaning, nursing and hospital ancillary work. These types of industries involve work which is physically heavy (in factories and hospitals), pressurised, low paid, with long unsocial hours (for example early morning and late night cleaning) and often involves shift work. According to Westwood and Bhachu (1988), the participation rates of minority women in the labour market are high. 66 per cent of indigenous white women aged 25-44 are economically active, compared with 77 per cent of women of West Indian origin and 62 per cent of those of Indian origin. Asian women of East African origin have a participation rate of 67 per cent. The picture is different for Muslim women from Bangladesh and Pakistan, however, with only 17 per cent being economically active. However, these figures do not take into account the lack of data on paid but semi-illegal home-work or work for their husband's or other family business.

These levels of participation demonstrate the importance of women's work as a resource within the household especially in the context of rising male and youth unemployment (Westwood and Bhachu, 1988). Many Black migrant women came to Britain to seek work in order to have a better quality of life and to send money back home. The state needed immigration to bring in workers from ex-colonial countries to do work that indigenous people refused to do and at lower wages. Many of these women have had two or even three low paid manual jobs. They still had to cope with the childcare, caring and domestic work (Prescod, 1986). Few such women regarded work as a liberating experience, especially as they are still responsible for childcare despite their contributions to the family's financial resources. The importance of women's traditional mother-wife role in relation to the wage earning role should be assessed before drawing any conclusions about the effect of women's paid employment on women's status within migrant families (Warrier, 1988). While migration does not bring about an improvement in women's status past research suggests it does result in some restructuring of gender relations (Campani, 1998).

Religion plays a major role in the lives of many migrant women. The next section examines some feminist analyses of patriarchy and Islam because both are key factors governing a

Muslim (hence a Somali) woman's access to work and to education.

2.5 Islam and Feminism

Religion is very important to Somalis. They are pragmatic and philosophical in their approach to religion but it permeates most aspects of everyday life (Lewis, 1993).

Somalis are mostly Sunni Muslims (about 99 per cent). Islam is a religion that sets boundaries, rules and principles for its adherents to follow⁵. After Roman Catholics and Anglicans, Muslims make up the third largest religious minority community in Britain (Ashraf, 1986). Women are especially affected by Islamic practices because women and young girls are expected to wear the hijab (headscarf). Nomadic women in Somalia are not veiled and they have more freedom of movement and independence because of their way of life, (Lewis, 1993). But everywhere Muslim women are expected to dress modestly and those who have short or revealing clothes face censure from their family about their un-Islamic behaviour.

Feminism as a movement that advocates equal rights for women would appear to be incompatible with Islamic practices. Paidar's (1995) definition of feminism is a useful basis for examining connections between Islam and feminism,

The term 'feminism' ...(can) be used in...the broadest possible sense to accommodate any type of activism by women focusing on their gender interests within any political or ideological framework...I will refer to a number of different feminisms, such as Islamist feminism, secular feminism, state feminism, socialist feminism. This broad definition of 'feminism' is not intended to obscure the differences between 'feminism' and 'gender activism' (Paidar, 1996:64).

Feminism can therefore cover any means by which women can bring about changes in their lives, whatever the system they live under.

Badran (1993) tried to establish a distinction between Islam and feminism by stating that it

⁵ Their adherence to Islam is seen in the marriage, divorce, gender relations, social customs, dress, food, choice of children's name and other practices such as fasting during Ramadan and the celebration of Eid festivities.

was patriarchy and not Islam that ensured women's subordination. I am unsure, however, whether patriarchy and Islam are separable though they do get played against each other. For example, many men certainly use Islam as a lever to assert their patriarchal rights within the private sphere, but some Somali women in Britain make reference to the Koran when asserting their rights in the home, while Egyptian feminists used Islamic arguments to challenge patriarchy in the private sphere and to legitimise their entry to the public sphere. However, Badran (1993) argues that patriarchy labelled 'feminism' in Egypt as western and hence un-Islamic. Therefore, the gains made in the public sphere were not reflected in the family where the application of legislation affecting personal status reflected the continued patriarchal Islamic dominance.

The work of some ethnographers on women in some Islamic societies has revealed that the domestic-public model⁶ (Rosaldo, 1974) did not explain the power dynamics they saw between men and women. Nelson (1997) in her work on the public and private politics of women in the Middle East, for instance, stated that women in some pastoral Islamic societies exercised a greater degree of power in social life than the literature demonstrated. She challenged the idea that women's power was reduced to the domestic domain and men's power to the public domain. Nelson's analysis of the role and position of women in Middle Eastern societies revealed women to have a structural role in forging links between kinship groups. This role is important in societies where families and kinship groups are social institutions. Women as sisters, mothers, daughters and wives act as 'information brokers'. They set up marriages, hold information on what is going on in other homes, and can keep or withhold the information from male members of the household.

While she acknowledges there were segregated social worlds, instead of seeing this as a limitation for women, Nelson (1997) maintains alternatively it was a world from which men were excluded. There are solidarity groups of women, in which women exercise considerable social control. Women are also acknowledged as having power in the religious or supernatural domain (i.e. through sorcery, divination, curing) and sexual misconduct by

⁶ Rosaldo (1974) argued that because women are mostly associated with their maternal role there is opposition between "domestic" and "public" roles. Women therefore do not have access to the authority and prestige that are the privileges of men. Due to this imbalance the exercise of power by women is regarded as illegitimate and their power bases are often limited by their association with the domestic world.

women affects a man's self-esteem and public image. Finally, Nelson recognised that past ethnographic studies undertaken by male and female ethnographers revealed considerable differences in women and power. The literature by male ethnographers on reanalysis reveals that the women in these societies were more powerful than the authors concluded. The interplay of power, gender and authority are deeply engrained within Middle Eastern societies. Nelson's work shows the strength of a theoretical approach that starts with the perspectives of the lives of the women and my study will also seek to focus on women's views of their status.

Mernissi (1985) argues in her work on male-female dynamics in Muslim society, that to grant Muslim women equal rights with men economically and sexually, the society would need to be desegregated in all spheres of social life. She uses Moroccan examples of how modernisation can affect gender relations in a Muslim society. She states that it is the fear of heterosexual love between men and women - love that meets the sexual, emotional and intellectual needs of both parties - that is behind the way women are treated in Muslim society. Men are supposed to reserve their energies for worshipping God and so the Islamic view of Muslim women as powerful sexual beings, traditionally led to their seclusion and restrictions on their movements. She argues that since in Third World countries, both men and women experience poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, Muslim women need to now take their rightful place in the Arab economy as workers and human resources.

The studies in Moghadam's (1994) work on predominantly Muslim political movements in Algeria, Bangladesh, Iran, Afghanistan and the Palestinian intifada maintain that nationalism, revolution and Islamization are gendered processes. However, literature and discourses in these areas, while dealing fully with class hierarchies and power relations, are relatively silent on gender, the family and the 'Women Question'. Feminist theory has demonstrated the importance of this omission, given the significance of representations of women as markers of cultural identity and political goals during processes of modernisation, nation building, social change and revolution. For example, in some Muslim societies undergoing Islamization, and in the fights of various nationalist movements, there was international contestation surrounding the issues of the veiling and unveiling of women, e.g. in Algeria and Iran, and women's access to education, e.g. in Afghanistan. A feminist analysis of

patriarchy and Islam is useful for providing a framework for the analysis of Muslim women's lives both within the public and the private spheres.

2.5.1 Islam and Patriarchy

Walby (1990) argues that patriarchy is made up of six elements: paid work, housework, sexuality, culture, violence and the state and that it is the interrelationship between these that create different forms of patriarchy. This analysis relates to western societies but the idea of sites of gender inequality varying and the concept of patriarchy can also be used to map different forms of gender inequality across ethnicity and class. Patriarchy is a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women"(Walby, 1990:20). In westernised societies, men expropriate women's labour within the household in the system of patriarchal production relations. Women are segregated into badly paid, less skilled jobs in the labour market. State policies and actions are patriarchal as well as capitalist and racist. Male violence against women take forms such as rape, wife beating, sexual harassment, compulsory heterosexuality and the sexual double standard; while patriarchal cultural relations represent women in institutions such as religion, education and the media in gender-differentiated forms of subjectivity.

It is important to differentiate between the notion of women's progress, e.g. improved educational attainment and employment levels, from changes in the form of gender inequality. In an analytical mode it means distinguishing between changes in the **degree** of patriarchy from changes in its **form**. Walby argues that Britain had moved from a private form of patriarchy to a public one. Private patriarchy is based on household production as the main site of women's oppression. Public patriarchy is found in public sites such as in employment and the state.

I will now take the debate on patriarchy to a more specific level, using research from an ethnic minority community resident in Britain. Bhopal's (1997) study draws on Walby's work on patriarchy to argue that the different forms of patriarchy experienced by South Asian women are influenced by religion, education and employment and that the two forms of patriarchy are both private and public. The site of private patriarchy is in the home and is

characterised by arranged marriages, dowries, domestic labour and the organisation of domestic finance. But education and employment were also key factors in the forms of patriarchy experienced by South Asian women. The positions of women in the labour market were linked to their education levels. Independent women had high education levels and held high positions in employment. She describes the state as patriarchal and racist, but points out that it nonetheless provides an outlet for women's emancipation through education. Equally South Asian men do not have as much access to the state to control South Asian women unlike white men and their control over white women.

Bhopal's (1997) research concludes that there are four main structures of South Asian patriarchy in Britain - household, state, labour market and culture (i.e. she omits violence and sexuality). According to Bhopal, violence and sexuality are important structures but they are part of only private patriarchy. (I believe to the contrary that public sexual harassment and public violence are public forms of patriarchy. For example, Muslim women who wear the hijab are subjected to racial abuse and harassment in public.) These findings are relevant to South Asian women who experience extreme forms of public and private patriarchy, but the forms of patriarchy experienced differ according to levels of education and positions in the labour market, and are somewhat different for South Asian than for white women. Moreover, Bhopal's (1997) research suggests that South Asian Muslim women experience a more intense form of private patriarchy than Sikh and Hindu women. She concludes that ethnicity has an effect on forms of patriarchy.

X Kandiyoti (1991) argues that Islam has been used to provide a blanket explanation for the subordination of Muslim women, but in fact the modes of patriarchy as practised in different Islamic societies have varied according to specific ethnic, class and cultural factors. Islam as a religion provides the framework for the way Muslim women lead their lives, including what they wear, whom they associate with, how they marry and divorce, and it is always a patriarchal system with men as the heads of the family. But Kandiyoti stresses that most Muslim women make some sort of bargain with men even under classic patriarchy: they adopt various strategies when dealing with different systems of male dominance.

This term is intended to indicate the existence of sets of rules and scripts regulating gender relations, to which both genders accommodate and acquiesce, yet which may nevertheless be contested, redefined, and renegotiated (Kandiyoti, 1991:40).

Patriarchal bargains where they exist changed with market forces, unemployment and migration. The breakdown of classic patriarchy in Muslim societies could be seen as a threat to established male and female relationships, within women's access to education, paid employment and greater spatial mobility leaving men unable to fulfil their traditional role of breadwinner. But in such circumstances, some women chose to continue to hold up a form of patriarchal bargain. This can take the form of using the veil/headscarf as a mark of modesty to signify that they are still worthy of protection. It appears as if the entry of Muslim women into public spaces in greater numbers has led them to find ways of maintaining respectability and a type of 'untouchability'. I find this concept of the patriarchal bargain very useful when analysing the part Somali women play in restoring traditional and cultural roles in Britain.

In an analysis of Muslim women's sexuality in Europe and how it is influenced by patriarchal forces, I found a study by Abdulrahim (1993). Abdulrahim outlines how the construction of a sexual identity for Palestinian Muslim women in Berlin, Germany was based on Islamic ideals. The shame and honour of the community rested on the women. The movement of young women was strictly controlled so they would not meet and mix with men and especially non-kinsmen. Mixing with men was viewed as assimilation, which would result in the loss of Islamic and national identity. The maintenance of boundaries for Palestinian Muslim women from the public world of the majority German society has led to a redefined sexual culture. It is also a way for this Muslim community to reassert its moral superiority in the face of economic, social, political and legal subordination by the majority German population. For example, the Arab woman was seen as modest and the German woman was seen as promiscuous (ibid).

The concept of the model Muslim woman in exile will be useful when looking at issues of Somali women's sexuality. There is a state of flux within migrant Muslim communities in the West, while they search to consolidate community, society and identity. Islam is often the unifying clarion call, which binds the whole community. Young women are seen as the heart of the community with their procreative powers and youth. Many of the women who have mixed with members of the majority western society want to do it on their own terms

without the stick and carrot approach of their elders. They want access to education and employment without the moral and cultural noose round their neck. Many have chosen to identify openly and proudly with Islam in dress and behaviour to the relief of their families (Afshar, 1994; El-Solh, 1993). Islam and patriarchy are alive, well and flourishing in Muslim migrant communities aided and supported by Muslim women who make patriarchal bargains. Islam is a fundamental part of a Somali woman's identity.

2.6 Education

Important work in the sociology of education from the 1960s to the 1980s stressed the extent to which schooling and higher education, despite its role in socialist projects of social engineering, in practice contributed to the reproduction (rather than the eradication) of social inequalities. Feminists, including for example, Arnot (1994) developed this by stressing that both the school and the family are the site of gender as well as class reproduction and that in the two institutions these processes occur simultaneously. The reproduction of class and gender positions occurs despite the teachings on anti-sexism and equal opportunities in the school system.

Johnson (1981, cited in Arnot, 1994) argues that social reproduction theory has sometimes taken on the mantle of functionalism, because it does not consider the reproduction of the contradictions that are also part of the social relations of production. He argues that Marxist feminist theories of social production do not fully take on board issues of gender struggle and conflict, forms of gender resistance, contradictions in the process of social reproduction of the female waged and domestic work force and patriarchal relations in the family and labour processes. Also, they do not note sufficiently the importance of education as almost the sole means of social mobility for the most disadvantaged groups (e.g. working girls).

The subordination of girls through the school system has been emphasised because the fight for women's education was a struggle fought largely by middle class women for their own rights. But it affected all women. Access to education can be a liberating process even within the confines of class structures and patriarchal oppression. Women's education has also made possible gains in entry into male dominated professions, hence access to status and

power.

Work on education and race has focussed on the way in which schooling continues rather than challenges social inequality. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was stressed that the percentage of Black pupils found in London schools for the educationally subnormal (ESN), was almost twice as high as the number of Black pupils in London schools; and Black pupils have continued to be over-represented in exclusions and suspensions from school (Skellington, 1992). To operate a racist system does not necessarily require racist motives, because the criteria used for assigning places to ESN schools were institutionally racist (Syer, 1982). Directly racist curricular and teaching materials, which contain stereotyping, misinformation and ethnocentrism also make racist assumptions about other cultures and Black people plausible and acceptable. Low teacher expectations can affect teacher behaviour which in turn influences pupils' perceptions of teachers' behaviour, and then pupils' own self-concepts and expectations hence the pupil's behaviour. Low teacher expectancy leads to a chain reaction.

But this is not inevitable, and other factors like parents and peer influence can also affect pupil behaviour, and some have seen great potential in anti-racist education. Teachers who hold and act on racist stereotypes can have a powerful effect on pupil performance, but so can an emphasis on multicultural education, anti-racist strategies and equal opportunities policies, such as were adopted by many inner city Local Education Authorities from the 1970s onwards (Jones and Kimberley, 1982).

Tomlinson (1984) highlights the problems that arise between home and school regarding ethnic minority children. She maintains that there is a need for national policies to improve home and school relations, because the intricacies of encouraging cultural diversity while respecting cultural identity might be best solved at a national educational level. It may involve teacher training, pre-school/ home liaisons, and more ethnic minority parental involvement in school activities.

Tomlinson and Craft (1995) outline the progress made in Britain since the 1980s towards a school curriculum that meets the needs of all children in an ethnically diverse society - as set

out in the Swann Report⁷ of 1985. In the 1980s over two-thirds of the local education authorities (LEAs) produced written equal opportunities and anti-racist policies. These policies were models of good practice for equalities in the curriculum and in the behaviour expected in the school. However, since the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) and the introduction of the National Curriculum, the concern for equal opportunities in education policy has taken a back seat. The ERA introduced market forces into education, encouraging competition between schools, the reduction of the powers of LEAs, the publication of school league tables, and standard assessment tests. These initiatives have put pressure on schools to meet narrow performance indicators and led to reductions in the funding of projects and initiatives to advance equality of opportunity in education. Gillborn (1999) argues that New Labour's failure to address issues of race and ethnic diversity within their current education policy demonstrates the limitations of a naive multiculturalism. It has led to the absence of initiatives to address institutional racism, token support for minority rights, and the persistence of colour-blind policies.

Gillborn and Gipps' (1996) research on the achievements of ethnic minority pupils notes however the improved levels of attainment even in disadvantaged areas. There are nonetheless large and growing disparities between the achievement of different ethnic minority groups, influenced by factors such as social class and gender. African Caribbean pupils especially boys and Bangladeshi pupils did not share in the increasing rates of educational achievement. African Caribbean pupils, both male and female in both primary and secondary schools, were between three and six times more likely to be excluded than whites of the same sex. There were widespread incidences of racial harassment against ethnic minority pupils. Issues of race and equal opportunity have lost their priority in education policy in the 1990s. While some ethnic minority people had improved access to higher education, they still did not have an equal chance of success in their applications to enter university when differences in qualifications, social class and gender were taken into account.

In the 1990s, girls achieved more educational qualifications than boys at school. Although young women are now on par with or having better educational achievement than young men

⁷ Lord Swann chaired the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups.

in schools in other levels of education (higher and further) there are some exceptions. Men are still more concentrated in the fields of science and technology and women in arts and humanities. These changes in female educational achievement affect younger women more than older women. Girls are achieving more GCSE passes than boys at 16 but the gap reverses in many subjects at A level and starts to fall off again at the higher education level. These gains can be linked to the improved access women have to education in most western countries. There are also links between educational qualifications and access to improved social and economic opportunities (Walby, 1997).

2.6.1 Adult Education

The formal adult education sector in Britain, although serviced by women with women as the majority of students, it is run by men. It is men who continue to control the policies and resources, make definitions, and interpret rules.

Adult education provision concentrates on a Euro-centred cultural heritage model of art, literature, history, music, languages and philosophy of the dominant culture. Adult education supports the existing family structures of parental education, home visiting schemes, family studies and child development classes. Classes are still offered on domestic based provision e.g. cordon bleu cookery, beauty care and designing clothes in many areas. These skill-based classes attract socially aspiring and better off women.

From the 1970s, Fresh Start, Access, Return to Study, Second Chance, English as a Second Language, Literacy, self defence classes, assertion and Women's Studies classes have been offered as women only classes in some areas by Workers Educational Association (WEA) classes and some Adult Education Institutes (AEI), to improve access to further and higher education for women. The part-time tutors, who have mainly been women, have developed their own materials in many of these classes, fees were low and child care provision was available. Classes were provided at weekends and in the holidays to improve access for women who work or who are poor (Hughes and Kennedy, 1985). Many of these classes were killed off in the 1980s along with the liberal arts provision critiqued above. Many women found these courses mind expanding and it gave them confidence in their intellectual and

social abilities. Funding for these positive discrimination classes for women is constantly under threat due to budget cuts and policies on student numbers in classes.

Adult education also provides English Language classes in AELs which are used by women refugees and migrants. There has been a significant decline in provision for women since the early 1990s. The remaining provision for women has been based on individual training needs (Women Returner courses) rather than collective issues (Women's Studies provision) (Benn, 1996). Otherwise minority women are rare as tutors. They are found in adult education as cleaners, canteen workers, crèche assistants and secretaries.

There have been changes within adult education policy since the 1990s. The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act set up Further Education Funding Councils for England and Wales. These Funding Councils would fund further education directly for 16-19 year olds and some part- and full-time further education provision for those over 18 in the areas of vocational qualifications. The Local Education Authorities were left in control of non-Schedule 2 provision mostly non-vocational public sector adult education in the areas of recreational, social and leisure provision (Fieldhouse, 1996). The trend towards accredited adult education by the Funding Councils and the Open College Networks have coincided with the erosion of welfare support and the re-imposition of domestic pressure on women. There have been severe funding cuts, inadequate childcare facilities, and a lack of political support for women's education and training. The substantial increase in women's part-time employment increased the need for women's education and training but lack of financial subsidies has made it too expensive for many women (Benn, 1996). The 1990s have seen a national revisiting of education policies and the interconnection between the state, education and work. The emphasis on literacy and numeracy in schools has been extended to cover adult basic education to provide people with skills to survive in the complex society we live in today. The major political parties in Britain have been concerned with issues such as access, accreditation, employability funding, participation, progression, regeneration and sustainability. Almost two thirds of continuing education students are women. However, women are under-represented in promoted posts and positions of responsibility (Benn et al, 1998).

2.6.2 Education of Migrants and Refugees

Many migrants are motivated to gain education. Mirza (1992) highlights three influences: the cultural orientation of working-class migrants towards meritocracy and credentialism. Secondly, the strategic rationalisation of post-sixteen education and careers. Thirdly, the expectation of economic independence, and the prevalence of relative autonomy between the sexes.

The education of refugees is particularly crucial, a 'human right', a tool to personal recovery, reorientation and settlement in a foreign society where many do not speak the language (Forbes Martin, 1992). But access to provision depends on a host of factors, especially for women (Smock, 1981; Kelly and Elliott, 1982).

According to Shawcross (1987) refugee women tended to drop courses when faced with practical difficulties of every day life such as childcare, lack of educational grants and educational guidance. Unsuitable English Language classes rather than specially designed courses are also an issue. Paradoxically, of course, women who do not seek education classes due to childcare or family responsibilities remain 'invisible' to providers of such educational provision. Despite its role in their acquiring survival skills, and for settlement and recovery, whether the latter be social and economic development in Britain or upon return to the home country.

Asylum seekers and migrant women who have professional qualifications from their home countries and who were nurses, teachers, lawyers, engineers, doctors and architects etc, find that their degrees and certificates are not recognised in Britain (Sales and Gregory, 1998). They have to study again, do a conversion course or start new careers. Overseas fees are double or treble the fees of home students and very few women are granted refugee status that entitles them to pay home student fees. They then have to wait for the three-year residency requirement before they are eligible to be treated as home students. The high fees and lack of advanced English fluency in addition to the above mentioned barriers discourage most women from pursuing the acquisition of professional qualifications in Britain.

Black and minority ethnic communities in Britain set up Saturday schools to challenge the racist assumptions about the intelligence of their children and to supplement their education (Mirza, 1992). The supplementary education provided instruction in mother tongue languages, religion and extra academic tuition. Somalis have also set up religious and educational supplementary schools (Kahin, 1997). Muslim parents regard their children's religious education in Koranic schools at weekends and after-school as playing an important role in preserving and passing on their children's cultural and spiritual heritage.

2.7 Identity

A Myriad issues are brought about by cultural assimilation that affect the settlement of migrants in the host country. Black feminism has provided a space and a framework for the articulation of the diverse identities of Black women from different sexualities, ethnicities and classes in different western societies (Parmar, 1989). They all stress gendered and racialised identities are variable, shifting and renegotiable. Gendered identities have changed with the influence of the second wave women's movement in Europe and the United States, when Black women asserted their differences and insisted on adding the dimension of race to feminist discourses (Bhavnani and Phoenix, 1994). Black feminists and Black women argued for the recognition of 'race' within the debates around women's inequality and challenged the assumption of a universal woman in previous feminist theories that looked particularly at issues of identity (Collins, 1991).

People of both Asian, and African Caribbean origin in Britain identified with the term 'Black' in the 1970s and 1980s. It gave them a sense of belonging to claim the term for themselves. This challenged the racist meanings of 'Black' which previously divided the Black populations. This sense of belonging developed in to ideas of nationhood, and the identification with Black diasporas which embrace the first, second and third worlds.

Feminist theorists view subjectivity as changeable, but early theories regarded the biological sex as being fixed and that gender develops through socialisation. Mama (1995) however, views subjective processes as being more active than the dualistic paradigm implied by socialisation. With regards to how Black femininity is gendered and racialised, it is

necessary to consider the multiple oppressions Black women suffer in Britain. There are issues of how Black identity has been constituted in the context of exile and struggle. Mama (1995) concludes with the need to embrace diversity and change instead of pushing for essentialism within the pathways created by the struggle for women's and Black liberation.

Aziz (1997) locates a feminism of difference where the space created by postmodernism allows both the deconstruction of subjectivity and the assertion of identity. Aziz views identity as fluid and fragmented. The problem with homogenising Black people's oppression in order to find common ground stems from the need to resist the divisive power of racism. Cultural identity matters when people are under attack because they tend to cling to something familiar. For example, the move towards Islamization of Muslim communities in Britain and consequently fundamentalism affected Muslim women when Muslims were the target of anti-Muslim racism during the Rushdie affair. Aziz maintains the need to challenge subjectivity and racial essentialism in the face of fixed and oppositional identities. Identity is complex and when it is articulated it can undermine areas of solidarities between women.

The issue of identity has assumed major importance for Black women as post-colonial migrants and as diasporic subjects.

A new dimension to the debate on postmodernism and feminism highlights how these modes of analysis when applied to Islamic fundamentalism have produced a neo-conservative feminism. There is a need to validate the experiences and voices of Muslim women while re-evaluating Islamic fundamentalism as a 'culturally specific' alternative to 'modernism' (Moghissi, 1996).

The postmodernist and the poststructuralist approaches have allowed the exploration of difference within the discourse of identity. This discourse has been widened to include race, gender, class, religion, diversity, disability, ability and sexuality. The last area for consideration therefore in this chapter is diaspora, which is important when exploring connections between migrants and their country of origin.

2.8 Diaspora

Some of the most exciting work on minority communities in Britain (and Europe) is currently around the concept of diaspora. In this section I want to concentrate on the framework of diaspora as articulated by Brah (1996).

Brah's use of the term diaspora as a conceptual category is useful when analysing diaspora as composite formations within a matrix of economic, political and cultural inter-relations. Diaspora is a given conglomeration of specific movements. She distinguishes between a homing desire and a desire for a homeland, within discourses of fixed origins. Not all diasporas contain a fixed element of return. Brah argues for a distinction between 'feeling at home' and 'declaring a place as home'. The issue of identities being plural and in process is part of the issue of diasporic identity formation. This discourse of identity is caught up in the web of 'multilocationality' which transcends territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries. The whole issue of identity is interspersed with hierarchies of domination and subordination that operate in certain situations. Whether or not these conceptions of identity are challenged depends on the 'play of identities'.

The concept of diaspora space is referred to as 'the intersectionality of diaspora, border and dis/location as point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes' (Brah, 1996:208). This concept leads to the formation of transcultural identities and the questioning of traditions and culture. There are ... 'multiple subject positions juxtaposed, contested or disavowed' (Brah, 1996:208). Tradition is itself continually invented with new strains of 'purity' in the face of new and alien cultures. The juxtaposition of the old culture alongside the 'native' culture is one point of intersection. With the theory of diaspora space is the intersection of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness and the 'us' and 'them'. Diaspora space is an issue for the migrants and their descendants as well as for the indigenous. This complex arena of power relations cuts across the four modes of theorising difference namely: social relations, experience, subjectivity and identity. Within these categories class, racism, gender and sexuality differences operate in a complex web of power.

In particular, I concur with Brah that social relations, experience, identity and subjectivity are important determinants of identity within a given diaspora. However, I believe more



emphasis should be given to the role of gender in identity formulation within migrant communities. While Brah does point out that there was contestation surrounding the absence of gender from earlier debates in the field of 'race and ethnic relations'. Major feminist works in the early part of second wave feminism did not address race, ethnicity or class; as well as the lack of sufficient focus on lesbians and gays in studies in feminism and other areas of work. The existence of these and other alternative ideologies which have challenged and resisted the politics of primacy have made it possible to theorise 'intersectionality' which cuts across disciplines, concepts and political borders. Brah herself however does not delve into power structures within migrant communities, which my study undertakes. There are power structures concomitant within migrant families which ensure the maintenance of traditional gender hierarchies of domination and subordination. Brah's analysis of this discourse addresses issues of cultural difference while keeping concerns about racism and economic exploitation in mind, but she loses sight of gender, which this thesis will keep central. Other studies have also highlighted the need to analyse gender in discourses about nationalism and women's movements (Kandiyoti, 1996; Walby, 1996; Wieringa, 1997).

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature relevant to understanding a Somali woman's migration and settlement in Britain. It has highlighted topics and findings from other studies that may affect the lives of the women in this study in the areas of migration, culture, education, employment, and religion and gender relations.

This chapter has given a necessarily brief overview of the existing literature in many areas relevant to understanding the position of Somali women in London today. First and foremost is looked at the frameworks that govern immigration which discriminate against Black and minority ethnic people, especially with regards to family reunion and stereotyping of Black people. Women have been treated less favourably than men under UK immigration and nationality laws for many years. Black people trying to join their spouses in Britain have found many obstacles. Stereotyping of Black and Asian women especially refugees increasingly over the years, also leads to discrimination in the implementation of immigration controls

Religion, particularly Islam, has been racialised in Britain and Europe especially in the post Rushdie period. The effect of anti-Muslim racism led to Muslim women becoming more strictly policed by Muslim men. Muslims also pushed for state support for separate schools capitalising on support from local authority multicultural policies. Language and religion affect the degree of cultural assimilation of migrant groups. When religion is closely linked to nationality and race it reinforces group identity and weakens the links to the new culture.

Women's role in migrant and refugee families has undergone changes due to migration and access to employment and education. An analysis of the western family reveals that there is a hierarchy of production, consumption and distribution. There are also rules of kinship and marriage which underpin the economic relationships within the family (Delphy and Leonard, 1992) Theoretical approaches to gender and the labour market have shifted from labour and production towards culture, identity and consumption (Witz, 1997). Migrant women often experienced the extension of patriarchal relations from the home to the work place (Anthias, 1983).

The family and schools are the site of gender reproduction, as well as reproducing class, cultures, ideologies and values (Arnot, 1994). Feminist analyses of gender, race, class and education have helped raise women's awareness of how they were disadvantaged within the educational system. The feminist analyses of Islam were useful for providing a framework for the analysis of Muslim women's lives within the public and private arenas.

Islam plays an important role in Muslim women's personal, spiritual and cultural identity. The types of patriarchy practised in different Islamic societies vary according to specific ethnic, class and cultural factors. However, Islam has a role of homogenisation of ideology and practice as concerns the family, gender relations and women. The issue of identity was important for Black women as post-colonial migrants and diasporic subjects. Identities were affected by race, class, gender and sexuality. Postmodernist and poststructuralist ideas allow women to explore differences within the discourse of identity.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study I was concerned with the changes in gender relations for Somali women since they came to live in the UK, and to see if there were any links to education levels. I also wanted to understand the experiences of a Somali woman living in Britain who was undergoing changes in personal autonomy and having access to educational and training opportunities. I hope my research findings would have implications for education and training policy and access issues for migrants and refugee women.

My previous research interests had led me in the past to use documentary analysis (Osime, 1985), case studies (Ali, 1989), and surveys (Ali, 1990). I had undertaken some earlier research on Somali women in 1988-1989 where I used case studies and interviews, which led me to an interest in the narrative aspects of life history as a method of enabling a participant to tell her story. In this research I did not consciously analyse or interpret the data. I presented it 'as given', and I gave my conclusions. In the present study I have a larger, more systematic sample and improved methods of data collection. I also have a more critical and reflexive reading and comparison of what they say, to set against participant observation of what they do. I have used primarily qualitative methods (group discussions, in-depth interviews, case studies and participant observation) with some support from questionnaires because the former are better for exploratory work looking at processes of change, relationships and interaction (Walker, 1985).

3.1 METHODOLOGY

Kabeer's (1999) research revealed that women's empowerment is linked to the degrees of autonomy they hold in different contexts. Women's autonomy is usually explored through the classic status variables of education, employment, marital practices, property ownership etc. Kabeer identified feminist concerns with empowerment to focus on gender equality in the household, family, community, the state and civil society. She also pointed out the need to use methodological tools that assess the meanings and values given to attempts to construct indicators of women's empowerment, referring to the importance of considering the values, voice and agency of subordinated groups when interpreting indicators of

empowerment. Kabeer's reflections on empowerment have been helpful in enabling me to use methods that support that approach.

The main argument I wanted to explore in this thesis is the degree of Somali women's autonomy and education's role in this. I found Blumberg's (1975) life options: deciding whether and whom to marry; deciding when to terminate a union; controlling one's sexual freedom, pre - and extra-maritally; controlling one's freedom of movement; having access to educational opportunities; and de facto share of household power; useful as a taxonomy for analysing how Somali women coped with the transition to a new culture. I developed her list to include: access to economic independence and access to information as a measure of status for Somali women, because of the importance these indicators have for their lives in Britain. I decided not to use her indicators 'control of reproduction and completed family size' in my study because of the difficulty I had of gaining access to data on fertility. I do however, refer to it in chapter 2 in the section (2.2) on Somali culture.

3.1.1 Research Questions

I therefore developed the following research questions:

1. Do Somali women feel they have more or less control over whether and whom they marry since coming to Britain?
2. Do Somali women feel they are able to decide when to terminate their marriage?
3. Are Somali women able to control their sexual freedom pre- and extra-maritally?
4. How has migration to Britain affected Somali women's freedom of movement?
5. What factors affect Somali women's access to education?
6. How has migration to Britain affected the share of household power between men and women?
7. Do Somali women have access to economic independence?
8. Do Somali women have access to information?

I needed to develop ontological and epistemological approaches that would enable me to work effectively with participants. This is due to the personal nature of information required and the need to explore meanings which required face-to-face interviews. The focus of my study is not 'out there', in some distant place, but very much part of the daily private life of the participants. This research is guided by women's own understanding of their experiences. Blumberg's framework was appropriate as a basis for analysing and interpreting Somali

women's experiences of their changing world but it imposes a structure that the women might not agree with.

3.1.2 Linking Qualitative and Quantitative Data

Hammersley (1992) identified seven main categories of difference in meaning between quantitative and qualitative methodologies. He lists these as 1) qualitative versus quantitative data. 2) The investigation of natural versus artificial settings. 3) A focus on meanings rather than behaviour. 4) Adoption or rejection of natural science as a model. 5) An inductive versus a deductive approach. 6) Identifying cultural patterns as against seeking scientific laws. 7) Idealism versus realism. He argues against the traditional quantitative-qualitative divide, saying that it is not simply a neat choice between one position or the other. There are a range of positions depending on the purposes and circumstance of the research and that the choices go beyond pure philosophical and methodological approaches.

Hammersley's arguments are helpful in enabling me to use aspects of both quantitative and qualitative methodology (see also Brannen, 1992). For example, I conducted 50 interviews using semi-structured questionnaires, with an opportunistic sample. I therefore have only used descriptive statistics to show the variations among my informants by age, education levels and marital status and do not pretend my findings are more than indicative.

According to Walker,

Because qualitative techniques are not concerned with measurement they tend to be less structured than quantitative ones and can therefore be made more responsive to the needs of respondents and the nature of the subject matter. (1985:3)

The flexibility of qualitative techniques was important because I needed a method that would respond to any change in the direction or focus that might emerge in this exploratory research. Many of the Somali women in this study were not comfortable with writing things down and would never have completed a questionnaire. They preferred to speak to me about their lives because oral history and oral communication are an integral part of their culture.

3.1.3 Grounded Theory

The grounded theory approach is a qualitative research **method** that uses a **systematic** set of **procedures** to **develop** an inductively derived grounded **theory** about a **phenomenon** (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:24).

Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), sociologists who come from the Chicago School of qualitative research, who believe it is important for researchers to develop and generate social theory and concepts during research. This approach has been labelled analytic induction, as opposed to theory verification (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). As a method it is concerned with constant coding, analysing and comparing data to develop theory and concepts. Another method outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is theoretical sampling, which involves selecting new cases to verify or modify the concepts and theory that have been developed. I have been influenced by grounded theory, but I am not using it strictly in this study because I am not seeking to prove the theory I generate, but to use existing theory e.g. feminist theory to explore the data I have generated.

3.1.4 Feminist Research Methodology

In conducting research with Somali women I decided to pay particular attention to the women's own experiences and understandings of their lives to guide the research. This I would refer to as feminist research. I collected and analysed the data, and I interpreted the findings, but then sought to explain the realities of Somali women's situation to the wider community and back to the Somali community too.

I can identify closely with Edwards (1990:479) who argues three principles underpin feminist research from conceptualisation through to production,

1. Women's lives need to be addressed in their own terms...A feminist methodology starts from an examination of women's experiences because "the personal is political". Women's oppression in a sexist society forms the basis for their own and other women's experiences...
2. Feminist research should not just be *on* women but *for* women. The aim of inquiry should be to provide for women explanations of their lives, which can be used as an instrument to improve their situations.
3. A feminist methodology involves putting the researcher into the process of production.

As an African Muslim woman from Nigeria, married to a Somali, who speaks Somali, I shared some characteristics with my participants apart from gender. These included religion, race, migration experience and language. These factors undeniably facilitated my access to

the participants. I did not require an interpreter to conduct the interviews. There are also traces of the 'outsider within' (Collins, 1991), in my relationship with the participants. I could empathise and understand the issues facing Somali women from my own arrival in England. However, I was also aware of our differences, which meant that I was able to view the research with some objectivity. The differences related to educational background, employment, culture and politics. These differences were also present among the participants in the research and some featured as variables in the research design.

I found feminist standpoint theory to be a useful approach to adopt for my work. This theory focuses on the notion that knowledge derives from experience, and women's experience produces the knowledge required to challenge oppression (Skeggs, 1997). I was also empowered as a Black woman researcher who has had to deal with her dual status as a researcher in a Western Academy and a member of a community oppressed by racism. There is a need for an alternative epistemology, one, which is by Black women, of Black women and for Black women. It helped me resist the tendency to pathologise and dehumanise Black women. I hope I have developed a Black feminist standpoint, which transcends sexist and racist research strategies and is also a form of individual empowerment (Collins, 1991).

According to Reinharz (1992:217) 'feminist research has also been original in its choice of *samples* of women to study', with an emphasis on the diversity among women. I have been careful to include different categories of Somali women within my sample in terms of age, socio-economic background, and education. This study is also about giving a voice to a group of women, who due to language, culture, racism, sexism and other barriers are invisible in mainstream British society.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Ethnography

All qualitative research studies contain rich descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable activities (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984:124).

The ethnographic approach appears 'true to life' (op.cit) but implicitly is also analytic-selective. It seeks to give an unbiased account of the lives being studied: what people say and how they act. The researcher describes what she sees and observes, but what is seen and how it is interpreted use prior theoretical conceptualisations. Disciplines such as anthropology,

and sociology used ethnographic approaches in carrying out fieldwork.

I have used certain elements of ethnography in my approach, especially with regards to descriptions of settings and what the women said. I have used many direct quotes from the participants but inevitably these are still selections. On the other hand, I have been able to use my own long-term knowledge of the culture obtained from when I lived in Somalia from 1979-1982. For example, when I lived in Mogadishu in the early 1980s, some Somali women laughed and made fun of a Somali man who shopped and cooked with his white European wife because it was so unusual. They said the man was emasculated and that he had become a 'woman'. I was able to tell this story and get reactions to contrast the changes Somali women are undergoing, changes regarding attitudes to housework when they settle in Britain. The women are now asking their own husbands for help with the housework after mocking and ridiculing a Somali man who did housework in Somalia. My knowledge of the Somali language also enabled me to pick up specific words, proverbs, songs and poetry that are used to deride and poke fun at assertive women and quiet men whose behaviour does not conform to the stereotype of their gender.

3.2.2 Case Studies

I have identified some variations in the characteristics of the Somali women participants in this study. To illustrate instances of these representative variables (age, marital status and education levels) I thought it appropriate to use case studies in the writing up. The use of case studies to describe changes in social life within communities, especially to demonstrate the effects of modernisation on village and rural life, was very much a factor in the works of the founder of sociological fieldwork Frederic Le Play (1806-1882) in France (Hamel, 1993). Le Play was concerned with transition and movement in society from prosperity to decline and he chose working class farming families to observe and monograph. His studies highlighted the fact that many different types of family existed. He broke down families into categories based on inheritance rights. His findings have been influential in my decision to use case studies to demonstrate the different categories of changes in gender relations among participants that the data have revealed in this study. Case studies produced by the Chicago School also have a prominent place in American sociology in the early 20th century. This is because they studied social problems such as unemployment, poverty, and violence which featured in the integration of rural and immigrant communities in urban areas (Hamel, 1993). I was also influenced by the work of El-Solh (1993) who used ideal types to illustrate the

various groups of Somali women living in East London.

Cohen and Manion (1989:150) listed some possible advantages of case studies and these include generalisations and attention to the subtlety and complexity of the case. Case studies can represent the conflicts between the viewpoints held by participants. They also provide accessible accounts that may later be used to guide e.g. educational policy making. They are also useful for exploring a single entity or phenomenon, “the case”, bounded by time and activity (Creswell, 1994).

Case studies require observation, and either participant observation, where the observer is involved directly in activities under observation; or non-participant observation, where the observer is not engaged with the activities being observed and stays apart from the group. The case studies used in this study are not concerned with observation of a particular setting but have been generated from participant observation and interviews.

3.2.3 Sampling

In this study I selected participants using the snowball technique, which Maykut and Morehouse (1994:57) refer to as ‘where one research participant leads to another’. This choice was used mainly due to the difficulty I had finding participants who fitted my concern to include variety of ages, educational backgrounds, marital statuses and knowledge of English etc. I wanted to use maximum variation sampling to understand the phenomenon by seeking out persons or settings, which represent the greatest differences in that phenomenon (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984; Patton, 1990).

I was not able to collect data from very large numbers of Somali women given the limitations of time, finance, and other resources. Nor would it have been possible to attempt random sampling since there is no sampling framework. Instead I interviewed 50 women face-to-face and in-depth for this study, using semi-structured interviews, with open questions where data on Somali women's feelings, attitudes and perceptions were being collected.

3.3 Phase One

I started to prepare for my fieldwork in the autumn of 1993. First of all I designed my questionnaire and I linked the sections and questions to the aims and outline of the study. I then had a copy of the questionnaire translated into Somali because most of the interviews were conducted in Somali or a mixture of Somali and English.

I conducted a first trial in October-December 1993 to assess the appropriateness of a questionnaire and how the participants would respond to questions. I decided to approach one college where there was a Somali lecturer I knew who taught English to Somali students. I used word of mouth to inform people about the interviews because of the oral nature of Somali society. The lecturer agreed to inform some students that I would be coming every Tuesday after his class to interview 1 or 2 students if they agreed to this. I went along and was able to record one and sometimes two interviews. Although most of the students spoke some English, the interviews were mostly conducted in Somali. Many students were shy of their spoken English and they felt more comfortable and confident speaking in their mother tongue. I interviewed 10 students in this way (part of the 50 in the sample) aged 16-25 at a college during autumn term, 1993.

I found the students were anxious to get home or to have lunch and there were sometimes interruptions. The interview room was an office that was quiet but some college staff wandered in and out occasionally. This felt like an intrusion, as if by looks and not actual words they were questioning the presence of a student in a staff room. The students were quite reticent and the data I collected was thin. Some students also wanted to be interviewed together or to sit in on the interview of their friends. This gave rise to prompts and hints in responses to questions, and impatience at having to wait for the other one to finish.

This made me realise that the college was not a suitable interview venue, so I abandoned this approach despite having access to many Somali students. I was also only reaching respondents with the same literacy levels, marital statuses, and numbers of children and age group i.e. mostly students aged (16-25), single with no children.

Meanwhile I had also interviewed 6 women students at another college. These women were older (26-41) than the previous college's students and most had children. However, the same

problems of lack of time and the lack of a suitable room for interviewing arose. I also realised that it was useful to have the questionnaire in English and to have a translated copy by my side. I was then able to ask the questions in Somali and write the responses to the first sections (given to me in Somali) in English. The rest of the interview (as all the previous interviews) was taped and most interviews were conducted in Somali and later transcribed by me into English.

I then decided to change the interview venue and to talk to people in their place of residence. I started interviewing women I knew and they in turn referred me to women they knew. They either took me to the women or they gave me their telephone numbers and I phoned to make an appointment. Most of the women were very welcoming and helpful.

I decided to conduct the research in the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Islington. There are large numbers of Somalis living in Tower Hamlets and attending the local college. I live in Islington and there are Somali women I know there. There are many Somali students attending the college in Hackney and I know staff there.

3.4 Phase Two

3.4.1 Questionnaire and Interviews

The main instrument I used for this study was a lengthy interview schedule which investigated the following information: biographical data, refugee experience, circumstances of arrival, attitudes to female circumcision, family planning, education, employment, housework, gender divisions in the family, arranged marriage, early marriage, western clothes, British culture, extra-marital affairs, divorce, changes within the Somali community and personal change.

The interviews were semi-structured. I recorded the answers to the first 33 questions manually on the questionnaire. The other questions I recorded on tape to encourage participants to open up and discuss their feelings about living in Britain and the issues it raised for them. I also asked supplementary questions based on the question topic as appropriate.

The type of interview I originally envisaged using was a structured one based on a questionnaire behind which, I as interviewer was able to hide. As noted, however my first

interview experiences produced several monosyllabic responses behind which my participants were hiding! I found the questionnaire useful for collecting the biographical information such as: age, children, marital status, housing and immigration details, but beyond that the interview came alive after question 34 as papers were put aside, the audio tape turned on, and with tea cups in our hands and children milling around us we went back in time to the arrival of the participant in the UK. The monosyllabic responses I elicited during the formal college study gave way to a steady stream of consciousness. I was a guest in their homes and I saw the women as equal partners in this research process.

It was a mutual voyage of discovery that brought forth tales of racism, xenophobia, homesickness, alienation and pain. This led to

...face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words. The in-depth interview is modelled after a conversation between equals, rather than a formal question-and-answer exchange (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984:77).

I found this method of interviewing very rewarding and it produced a wealth of data which I felt was aided by my cultural insights, empathy and awareness as a researcher.

At one stage in my research, in spring 1996, I had the opportunity to teach a session on assertion and confidence building skills to my class of Somali women. At several times during the ten-week course the issue of differences between the lives of the women here in Britain and in Somalia were discussed and debated. Different views of the women surfaced and the subject of gender relations came up. I informed them about the focus of my research and I requested their permission to observe and take notes of their different opinions. These group interviews occurred towards the end of the course, when we had got to know one another.

Group interviews in qualitative research are useful approaches to obtaining different points of view on topics of interest to the researcher. The group interview enables the participants to hear the views of others on the topic in focus, and to share points that may not have come up in individual interviews. The group interview is a 'conversation with a purpose' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:104).

3.4.2 Structure of Interviews

The structure of the interviews was very important for my study, because this was the main data collected. I aimed to collect participants' comments, feelings and attitudes on a range of questions pertaining to personal changes, changes in gender relations and life options changes.

In the college many of the participants gave monosyllabic answers to some questions, they just answered 'yes' or 'no'. I then decided to revise the questions providing a range of options which the participants could choose from. This was helpful where participants were shy or did not have much to say on the topic. The second half of the interview consisted of completely open questions to elicit opinions and attitudes.

Jones (1985:47) described the process of interviewing as,

one in which researchers are continually making choices, based on their research interests and prior theories, about which data they want to pick up and explore further with respondents and those which they do not. The making of these choices is the imposition of some structure.

I had the freedom to explore some issues further and in some cases to skip the formal questions and delve straight into the open questions. These open questions allowed the participants to respond with their own ideas rather than the set options used in closed questions (Jones 1985:49).

3.4.3 Participant Observation

I was able to be a participant observer at weddings, parties, seminars and a community based English Language class. I also collected some information on young Somali women while teaching and when visiting colleges. During the period of writing up (1995-2000) I continued to be involved in the community and I was able to explore my interpretations further.

Denzin (1970, cited in Silverman, 1985:105) defines participant observation as,

A field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, respondent and informant interviewing, direct participation and observation and introspection.

The field strategies I adopted included all those described by Denzin (op. cit.) as well as diary keeping.

While doing the fieldwork I met several Somali women students. For example, there were over 30 in one language support class I visited. However, when I interviewed a female Somali undergraduate she told me that the numbers of young Somali women that proceeded to higher education were quite low. She knew of only a few other Somali women in her university in London.

In one college, some Somali women could be differentiated according to their mode of dress. Some wore Islamic dress with headscarves and long dresses and kept to themselves socially. Others wore the latest western fashions and hairstyles and mixed with other students. A male lecturer had told me that initially there were women who had not worn headscarves upon their arrival at the college and had began to do so here, in order to be identified in their community as serious Muslims. He also informed me that some students discarded the headscarf after two terms or so. My role as participant observer in a classroom enabled me to verify this information. I dressed mainly in trousers, blouses and matching headscarves in African material. This made me appear different to the women I was interviewing.

The social reality of the lives of Somali women refugees included their daily interactions with their immediate families, friends, and members of the wider society. In an attempt to interpret the data I generated, I had to observe the lives of my participants in different contexts. I was able to attend six Somali wedding receptions in large hotels and in homes of educated and uneducated women from northern Somalia, two seminars and three workshops and five adult education and college classes where Somali women were participants and contributors. It is through seeing Somali women in a variety of settings that it is possible to describe the social interactions that are going on in their lives. I became immersed in the whole life of the community (Stack, 1974).

I attended weddings as an invited guest and this enabled me to observe the gender divisions and the structure inherent within Somali society. In the four weddings at large hotels in Central London women and men sat at separate tables. Live Somali bands played Somali music in two of the hotel receptions. Professionals videotaped the receptions. In the hotel wedding receptions younger men tended to stand around talking and families sat together. In the two weddings that took place in private houses, separate rooms would be reserved for female and male guests. There were divisions in dress with some Somali women dressed in the latest modern western fashion and others in traditional Somali clothes, or long dresses and headscarves. The bridegrooms wore western suits and ties. The brides wore long white

wedding gowns with veils at the hotel receptions. There were traditional Somali dances performed at the weddings in private homes and at some of the hotel wedding receptions. The social structure reflects the blend of the old and new, and the modern and the traditional cultural practices.

The seminars I attended where Somali women made contributions were about refugees and the launch of a survey on the mental health needs of Somali women. The Somali women who attended these seminars were university graduates who worked for community organisations or the health service. They wore their traditional clothes and headscarves. The other participants at the seminars were local authority and health authority middle managers and senior managers and women workers from the voluntary sector.

There were a wide range of Somali women (in terms of age and education levels) who attended the local community organised health and education workshops. The workshops were organised by the local Somali community in association with the local health authority. The purpose of the workshops was to give information on women's and children's health, nutrition and the education service using videos and Somali nurses, doctors and teachers to talk to the audience who were all local Somali women. A crèche was also arranged for the workshop so the mothers would be free to listen to the speakers. The women asked lots of questions and held lively discussions on the issues. Leaflets and information sheets were available but because most of the women were not literate in their mother tongue or English, these were not helpful. The workshops were useful ways of providing information because of the oral nature of Somali society.

3.4.4 Field Notes and Diary

I kept notes on the circumstances pertaining to the interviews, and how they went. These notes were of use when analysing and interpreting the data. I sometimes wrote these field notes in the questionnaire or I recorded them directly on to the tape. Taylor and Bogdan (1984:104) described how journals are useful to 'keep a record of conversations with informants outside of the interview situation.' Conversations I had with participants after the formal interview was over were also very informative.

I observed classes in the college and in an adult education centre. I taught Somali women English in an adult education class over a ten week period in 1995/96 and we had many wide

ranging conversations on gender relations, education, culture, religion and the changing roles of Somali men and women. I asked their permission to take notes during our meetings. I recorded my notes in a small hard-backed notebook, which I used to take notes during my supervision meetings. I collected further anecdotal information when facilitating parenting classes for Somali women in 1999/2000 with a Somali woman co-facilitator. I obtained much more useful information because my co-facilitator knew the women in the class. She recruited the women and they trusted her. She also explained and translated concepts and practices for me such as cultural values and the present state of gender relations. This information was very useful because when I started my research most participants had only been in Britain for about five years, whereas by 1999 many Somali women have been in Britain for ten years or more.

My note taking during fieldwork included descriptions about the nature and circumstances in which the interview took place. Some of my participants were wary and suspicious of having the interview taped. One woman refused to be interviewed because she thought I was going to use the information for a media programme. Some women agreed for me to tape some parts of the interview, and told me when they wanted me to switch off the tape.

I explained to the participants that I would like to tape some parts of the interview because I was not able to write down the responses in Somali. The tape recorder was visible and plugged in during the interviews, it was switched on for the in-depth interview. If a participant was not happy with the interview being taped I would abandon taping immediately.

In fact, I agree with Taylor and Bogdan (1984:57) where they stated that,

Researchers should refrain from taping and taking notes in the field at least until they have developed a feel for the setting and can understand the effects of recording on informants.

Some participants revealed more to me at the end of the interview after the tape recorder had been switched off. I then took written notes of these discussions.

3.4.5 Documents

For this study I also collected official public documents that relate to policy towards Somali refugees from central and local governments, Europe, the colleges, Somali community groups and other sources. Official and public documents, reports, records, policy papers, newspaper articles and other materials are all sources of data that can be analysed. These documents will reveal different views and positions, which could affect access of Somali women to education, housing, health, income support and other systems. The purpose of the qualitative researcher who collects and analyses public and official documents is to learn about the people who write and maintain them (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984).

Somali women do not have high literacy levels in English and Somali. Many women send audio tapes and videos to their families in Somalia instead of letters. Therefore I also collect any materials I could find produced by the women when they first came to Britain or since their arrival which could shed some light on their experiences. This included a collection of writings published by a Somali women's writing project in Tower Hamlets (Somali Women's Association, 1987). I have quoted from this book in the study. It records different Somali women's experiences of life growing up and getting married in East London in the 1960s – 1980s.

Somali culture is an oral culture and there is a rich literature of poetry, drama and songs produced in Somalia and in Britain. This literature and the lyrics of songs provide a wealth of information on gender relations and the position of Somali women, which is pertinent to this study, but must be read as constructed cultural products, not as translucent windows into values or behaviour.

3.5 Data Processing

I conducted the interviews by myself because I am quite competent in the Somali language. Most of the interviews were recorded on audio tape in Somali, some were in a mixture of Somali and English and a few in English. I had a translated Somali version of the questionnaire beside me when I conducted the interviews. I translated the interviews that I taped in Somali into English simultaneously while I was carrying out the transcriptions from the audio tapes. Initially I asked my partner who is a native Somali speaker for help with translating certain words from the interviews. Then as I gained more confidence I realised that I did not need help with the translations because I had asked the participants to explain

the meaning of unknown Somali colloquialisms, proverbs, concepts and words in the context of the interview.

Invariably I only used the tape towards the middle of the interview when we were conducting in-depth exchanges. The majority of interviews were conducted in the Somali language, which I do not write. The Somali language uses the roman script so I can read the language but I cannot write it. I found it difficult to translate the spoken Somali of the participant into English simultaneously. Therefore I needed the interviews to be taped in order for me to be able to translate the interviews into English from Somali during the transcription of the taped interview.

When working with translated data it is important to preserve the meaning of the words, tone, and language used in the interviews. There are gender issues involved when translating an interview conducted between two women. This is because an outsider or a man maybe unable to capture the exact meaning of the words in their context and they may be lost in translation, dismissed as unimportant or paraphrased. The field notes I took during the interviews were invaluable when recalling the circumstances of the interviews.

3.6 Data Analysis

I manually sorted and coded the data from the transcriptions and field notes into emerging themes and headings based on the research questions using index cards. I then cross-referenced the data based on the variables of age, education levels and marital status. I entered the biographical information from the questionnaires into a data processing system called Filemaker Pro to sort the data for each participant. I also entered the various options from questions that had choices of responses into Filemaker Pro. This allowed me to do some quantitative data processing from responses based on the variables of education levels, age and marital status, though the sample was too small to make complex cross-tabulations.

3.7 The Participants

I aimed and achieved interviews with 50 Somali women for this study (see appendix I). The fieldwork was carried out from December 1993 - July 1994 in north and east London. I tried to get a sample of women that reflected the range of variables I thought would be relevant, which included age, education, and marital status. It was easiest to interview women with young children who formed the majority of the participants (the students in the college). Young women (16-25) born in Britain were hard to find. Many of the families who arrived with the first wave of Somali migration in the 1950s live in East London and other towns all over Britain mainly Cardiff, Bristol, Liverpool, Sheffield and Middlesborough, so they are under-represented here.

I would have liked to have been able to compare women who were living in Britain since the 1960s and 1970s, and those who arrived after the civil war from 1988 to see if there were any differences. The numbers of participants I was able to interview from the former category were however too small to make any meaningful analysis. The pressures of life in London in the 1960s appear to have been similar to those faced by Somali women in the 1990s. But the circumstances of leaving Somalia were very different. In addition in the 1990s there are now more women who are able to provide support to each other.

Tables 3.1-3.4 give a profile of those who were interviewed.

Table 3.1 Ages of participants

Age ¹	Number
16-17	4
18-25	14
26-33	15
34-41	10
42-49	2
50 and over	5
Total	50

¹ Participants gave their ages within the above age ranges.

Table 3.2 Marital Status of participants

Marital Status	Number
Single	19
Married	26
Divorced	4
Widow	1
Total	50

Table 3.3 Education levels of participants

Education Levels	Number
None	4
Koranic	5
Primary	7
Secondary	3
Adult Education	1
Further Education	22
Higher Education	8
Total	50

Table 3.4 Occupations of participants

Occupation	Number
Housewife	24
Student	19
Community Worker	4
Teacher	1
Sales Assistant	1
Nurse	1
Total	50

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I explained the various methods I used to collect this qualitative piece of research within the feminist framework seeking to make visible the mosaic of Somali women’s lives in Britain.

In many cases the snowball method was difficult to implement. It required making an appointment with one participant who then had to make an appointment with the next contact. On several occasions it was inconvenient to interview women or they were unavailable. The students I interviewed in the college were more accessible if I attended all the classes unless my participants missed a class on the day scheduled for the interviews. There were time constraints when interviewing students at the college after a class, because they had to go and pick up their children and cook for their families. Many had to leave immediately after a class. If they agreed to be interviewed, then they were conscious of the

time constraints. Participants were generally co-operative and answered the questions but some did not want the interview recorded on tape, so I took notes and wrote them up afterwards. Two participants wanted to use a false name despite my assurances that the interviews would be anonymous and confidential. My access to participants was negotiated verbally. I did not use an introductory letter due to the oral nature of the Somali community and the low literacy rates both in Somali and English. I obtained access directly, through intermediaries, over the telephone and face-to-face.

I have discussed the questionnaire, the selection of participants, the field work organisation, and material gathered as a participant observer. The background to the choice of methods for data collection and analysis has been a voyage of discovery for me. I made decisions about the types of methods to use based on the nature of my research and the types of information I had to collect, but there was also serendipity. A qualitative approach justified as appropriate for dealing with deep personal issues, which would not have been revealed with a survey using a self-completed structured questionnaire.

Chapter 4

PREVIOUS LIFE IN SOMALIA

It is important to have some knowledge of Somali culture, history, and politics in order to understand Somali women's situation in Britain. Somalia is located in the Horn of Africa, and the land area is 637,540 square kilometres. The country's nearest neighbours are Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya. The climate is semi-arid to arid with hot temperatures all year round. The harsh dry climate with little vegetation provides a natural setting for nomadic pastoralism which the majority of the population practise (Lewis, 1993).

The population estimate is about 5 million. Large shifts in population have taken place during the civil war when thousands of Somalis fled the country and sought refuge in neighbouring countries and abroad. The majority of Somalis are Sunni Muslims, about 98.3 per cent according to Ruhela (1993). Somalis are by tradition pastoral nomads who tend livestock - camels, goats and sheep in rural areas. Most urban families have pastoral affiliation through their herds that are kept in the countryside. In the south, there are agricultural settlements where cultivators live. The most fertile areas are found between the Juba and Shebelle rivers.

Somalis are a patrilineal society and descent is traced through the male line (Samatar, 1995). There are six main clan divisions in Somalia. They are Darod, Isaq, Hawiye, Dir, Digil and Rahanweyn.

Since the UN withdrawal from Somalia in 1995, there has been fighting in the South between the Aideed and Ali Mahdi forces. Aideed died in 1996 after being wounded in battle and the stalemate continues. Internal wrangling and interclan fighting in northern Somalia and around its capital, Hargeisa, has split the government of Somaliland, which declared its independence in May 1991. It still has not achieved international recognition and the goal to the future survival of the country rests in the government being able to achieve unity and peace. Numerous authors (Afrah, 1994; Dualeh, 1994; Haakonsen and Keynan, 1995; Lyons and Samatar, 1995; Stevenson, 1995; United Nations, 1996) have

written about the Somali Civil war and the events that led to and preceded it. What I have attempted to do here is to outline the main events that were the catalysts, which forced Somalis to flee their country as asylum seekers (see appendix II). This chapter will explore women's lives in Somalia up to the civil war and their flights to seek asylum. The sections covered are nomadic women, marriage, circumcision, women in public life, women under Siad Barre's regime, education and women at war.

4.1 Nomadic women

The Somalis are Muslims and Islam plays a large role in the life of the people. 60 per cent of Somalis are pastoral nomads and even most urban women have spent parts of their childhood in the countryside herding the goats, sheep and camels. Livestock are part of the traditional wealth of the Somalis and were often part of a woman's dowry during marriage.

The daily routine of the nomadic woman is quite hard, as she has to set up the *aqal* (home) which is portable and is taken from settlement to settlement. She has to milk the livestock and light the fire to cook the meals. When I lived in Somalia, I saw many women coming to the market to sell camel's milk from a large jug, which was carried on the back. The young children are generally responsible for herding the camels, goats and sheep. Somali women tend to have large families, and with the high rates of infant mortality women can have up to 10 or more children. The domestic tasks of the women are often shared with members of the extended family as most women have close relatives living with them or nearby.

4.2 Marriage

Marriage in Somalia is traditionally conducted according to Islamic tenets by a sheikh (*wadaad*). The parents of the bride and groom often arranged the marriage and the husband could be considerably older than the bride. The suitor's father or other senior male relatives will approach the parents of the potential bride. If her father consented the suitor will have to pay an agreed bride wealth (*yarad*) to the family of the bride. The official Islamic ceremony can be performed by proxy without the bride and groom being present. The bride's father and the bridegroom's male representatives will normally be present and the woman's consent had to been obtained. The couple are then man and wife

but they do not normally live together (*aqal gal*) until the man has set up and furnished a home for his bride. This occasion is normally preceded by a wedding reception (*aroos*) and these can be quite lavish depending on the means of the families. The man will make the *meher* payment to his wife and give her marriage presents including gold jewellery. Gold jewellery including bracelets, necklaces and earrings constituted important parts of a woman's assets which were passed on through the mother's side (Ahmed, 1995).

After payment of the agreed sum, which in content commonly consisted of camels, cattle and cash then the wedding would take place. The *meher* is a marriage contract under Islamic law and the couple would then be legally married. Some couples regard this as an engagement and the woman will continue to live with her parents, until the wedding reception (*aroos*). This can take place up to a year or longer after the *meher*, depending on the age of the bride and the circumstances of the groom.

To remain unmarried after the late twenties if the woman was educated was often seen as a source of embarrassment for the family. Women were often married at the ages of 16-20 in the past, but with more families becoming aware of the importance of education it was quite common to have women in urban areas getting married at the age of 20 and above.

The bride-wealth was regarded as compensation to the family for the expense of bringing up their daughter. The husband in return was getting a wife who will cook, clean, bear him children and she will be maintained by her husband. There are couples who fall in love and then elope (*masafo*) but they later get their union officially sanctioned by the exchange of marriage gifts between the families. However, elopement is generally frowned upon, as marriage is a union not only between two individuals but also between clans. There are some clans which have been traditionally enemies, so hence lineage is also an important consideration in marriage (Simons, 1995).

The practice of elopement was quite widespread due to the strict nature of the way marriage was contracted, but when the parents are informed, the man still has to pay the *gabaati* and the *yarad*. To summarise, the stages of the marriage are as follows: the suitor's father or a senior family member would approach the woman's parents. If the woman's parents are agreeable then the formal betrothal begins with an exchange of

marriage gifts called *gabaati*, which are mostly in the form of money. The *gabaati* is shared out to the elders present on the day of the *meher*. The value of the *gabaati* gifts exchanged varies according to the financial status of the bridegroom and the bride. Usually half of the gifts are returned to the elders representing the suitor's family. The money is shared out as a blessing during the *meher*.

The groom's family pays a *yarad* (bride wealth) before the bride moves to her husband's house. During the exchange of gifts, those given from the bride's family to the suitor and his family are called (*dibaad*). The groom should pay for the wedding reception (*aroos*) which signifies that the couple will start living together. The bride's family often provide cooking utensils, household furnishings and jugs of *mugmad* (diced camel meat cooked in spices and preserved in ghee and dates).

In Somali customary law and practice women are under the legal protection of their father, husband or a male relative. In the event of the death of the husband the widow is often married to her late husband's brother. This process is referred to as *dumaal*. The reasoning behind it is to keep the children in the family, and to provide for the widow. The widow will then become the second wife if the brother-in-law is already married. Women who are not educated or do not have the means to support themselves and their children are often subjected to this practice of widow inheritance, which is dying out.

4.3 Circumcision

Somali girls are circumcised and this practice includes infibulation and clitoridectomy. An extensive field investigation into female circumcision in Somalia, which was carried out in 1981, revealed the following. Over 99.3 per cent of women in Somalia were circumcised. Infibulation was the commonest method used; the age a female was circumcised ranged from birth to 5 years. The complications of circumcision were numerous and varied from immediately proceeding the operation, at marriage, childbirth and during the menopause (Grassivaro Gallo, 1988).

Virginity is highly valued and girls who are not circumcised would not be well thought of by their peers. Some women, who were recommended by medical doctors to have the infibulation reversed due to gynaecological problems, have refused due to their fear of the

adverse reaction of potential suitors. So these women suffer great pain during their monthly periods. Other women, who have had this reversal operation, have letters from doctors certifying to this fact.

Marriage is a very special transition stage for Somali women as it marks the time when the circumcision and infibulation stitches are removed to enable the marriage to be consummated. In Somalia, the bride is sometimes taken to a hospital to be opened up or a woman traditional specialist, who initially did the infibulation, also does this. It is often the practise of the husband to open the infibulation by himself.

4.4 Women in Public Life

In 1961, the Women's Auxiliary Corps was established in Somalia and the women recruits were enlisted for two years. They received five months training to fill positions in administration, personnel, and military welfare. The basic training also consisted of administration, record keeping and typing. Duty assignments were mainly within Mogadishu or regional field headquarters. Somali women took part in the votes for the 1958 municipal elections in Italian Somaliland. Women in British Somaliland voted in the 1961 national referendum on the constitution. According to Nelson (1982), women's role in public affairs was insignificant and their legal status remained unchanged. Nelson (1982) also asserts that there is a distinction to be made between women's apparent lack of status in the public domain and their wide level of influence in the private (domestic) domain.

4.5 Women under Siad Barre's regime

The military regime of Siad Barre set up committees to deal with women's affairs. Women were encouraged to play a more active part in education, sports and government. The government insisted women be educated especially beyond elementary level. The government gave women equal inheritance rights in many areas, this in particular gave rise to protests by religious leaders. Ten religious leaders were put on trial and executed for protesting that the government's reforms to improve the status of women were against the Koran. Opposition was not tolerated by Siad Barre's government (Nelson, 1982).

Women were playing a larger part in public life in the 1980s. I was a lecturer in the Somali National University from 1979-1982 and I had equal numbers of men and women in my classes. Nelson (1982) states that 6 out of 171 members of the People's Assembly were women. The increase in the numbers of women and girls attending secondary school and at university level is also noted by Nelson (1982). The women who lived in urban areas were most likely to benefit from being sent to school and from governmental directives on equal rights for women. The lives of nomadic women in rural areas were not affected by these political changes, as government did not reach them due to their highly mobile lifestyles. Their contact with urban centres was limited to visits to market to sell goods and buy provisions.

4.6 Education

The education system that existed in Somalia during the colonial period was quite rudimentary. The education system was set up in the North by the British and in the South by the Italians. The medium of instruction was the colonial languages until 1969.

The inheritance of women is half that of men under Islamic Law and in Somali culture girls did not receive land and camels as inheritance. Girls were not routinely sent to school as they were destined for marriage and it is expected the husband will provide his wife's maintenance. From the few that were educated most did not proceed beyond elementary level.

The main form of education that existed in northern Somalia when the British Protectorate was established in 1886, was that of Koranic schools run by *wadaad* (sheikhs) where Arabic and Islam were taught. In 1934, there was only one Government Elementary school in the North under the British with an enrolment of 120 students. More elementary schools were set up in 1942-1948, the first secondary school was set up in 1953 at Sheikh. Three small elementary schools were specifically set up for girls in 1947- 48. These schools concentrated on domestic science and the Koran, Arabic and Oral English were also taught. The number of girls enrolled is put at 34. There were 25 private Koranic schools for boys with an enrolment of 800, and one Koranic school for girls with 7 pupils in 1948, these schools received government grants. In 1950-51 the number of private and Koranic schools increased to 38 this included 6 for girls. The

overall enrolment for this period is of 1200 pupils and 138 were girls (Ruhela, 1993).

The enrolment figures show a steady increase but the percentage of Somalis who were literate in Arabic or English in 1951 was less than one per cent, and only about 2 percent of children are recorded as being enrolled in government or private schools in 1951 (Ruhela, 1993). As is illustrated by the above figures, the proportion of girls enrolled in schools is much lower than that of boys. Although girls did attend Koranic schools, their families believed that as girls were going to be married education was not essential.

The British did not establish any form of further or higher education in the North. Adult education was provided in the form of literacy classes. Somalis who received higher education at this time were sent abroad to study on scholarships. Education in British Somaliland was not effectively established. The reasons given for this are the insufficient government expenditure on education, the lack of interest by Somalis in western education and the Somali people's reluctance to accept the imposition of taxes to fund educational provision. The Somalis believed that the establishment of western education would lead to the spread of Christianity among the people (Issa-Salwe, 1994). The aim of the British educational policy then was to educate the people in order to create strata of minor civil servants, such as clerks and record keepers to support the colonial administration.

Education in the Italian administered region of southern Somalia was provided by elementary schools run by Catholic Missions. A trade school was set up to teach Italian to Somalis. Approximately 1,777 pupils were enrolled in the elementary schools in 1939. The Italians lost control of the south in 1941, however they returned in 1950 as the UN Trusteeship Authority and stayed on until Somali independence was granted in 1960. Under the Italian Trusteeship from 1950-1960, various educational initiatives took place. These included the establishment of a Teacher Training School, Schools of Political Administration, Aeronautical School, Fundamental Education, Education for Nomads, Libraries and Travelling Libraries. In 1959, about 31,000 children and adults of both genders were enrolled in primary schools, 246 in junior secondary schools, 336 in technical institutions and a few hundred more in higher educational institutions (Lewis, 1965). The educational provision in Italian Somaliland contributed to the emergence of an educated group of Somali men and women who were to play a part in politics and

administration after independence in 1960. Many Somali professionals were educated in Italy.

Education enrolment increased from the relatively low figure of 42,516 students in 1969/70 academic year to 103,680 students in 1973/74. This rapid increase was due to the national literacy campaign of the early 1970s. Education was clearly a cornerstone of the Siad Barre regime, which had Scientific Socialism as its political ideology. The major achievement in education was the adoption of the Latin script for writing the Somali Language in 1972 (Hoben, 1988). This enabled Somali to become the language of instruction in schools from the late 1970s.

A major, national adult literacy campaign was embarked upon in 1973. The emphasis was on self-help with volunteers among students and workers. By the end of the third phase, over 400,000 adults had successfully passed through the system in urban and rural areas.

The education of women was given priority due to the very low levels of female literacy in the country. Centres for Women's Education were set up throughout the country. The facilities in Koranic schools where most Somalis started their formal education were improved. Emphasis was put on African history and culture in the school curriculum. Textbooks in science had to be rewritten into the Somali language.

A University Institute was set up in Mogadishu in 1965. It later became the Somali National University with faculties of Law and Economics, and the first students graduated from there in 1971. This marked the first graduates to receive university degrees in their own country. Students also graduated from the College of Education at Afgoi. In addition to Education, Law and Economics, further faculties at the National University were added from 1972. These were Agriculture, Mathematics and Science, Medicine and Veterinary Science. I taught French at the Education Faculty and English at the College of Education in 1979/1980.

The medium of instruction in the University was English and Italian. However, the government was fully committed to a process of Somalisation of the teaching staff, whereby more Somalis would replace foreign teachers. The wider use of the Somali

language and script was also a priority.

The school system in Somalia in 1981 had four components: pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher. All private schools were nationalised and the government had direct control of schools. Children started school at seven and over. Girls had a high drop out rate from school within the first four years after completion of primary school. Families believed that education for girls after the onset of menstruation was of no use (Nelson, 1982). Pupils learnt from textbooks and traditional methods of teaching and discipline were used in Somali schools. Most of the government schools were mixed with boys and girls in the same classroom. The pupils wore school uniforms. Somali children, who attended school in Somalia, find it hard to adjust to the different teaching methods in British schools which are more child centred and discipline is not as strictly enforced.

According to Ruhela (1993), official figures put the literacy rate in Somalia in 1986 at 40 per cent. 50 per cent were enrolled in primary schools and 7 per cent were attending secondary schools. Since the civil war started in 1988, educational institutions in Somalia have not been functioning. In between the battles in the urban centres, rudimentary systems of schooling have been operating. The teachers have been volunteers, there have been no textbooks and classrooms are more or less in the open air. The most successful system of schooling to start up after the war has been the Koranic classes, where most Somalis started their formal education. Most Somali children coming to Britain as asylum seekers have not attended school for many years and they would not speak English.

There are forms of traditional education that are very important for Somalis. Most Somalis are informally educated by their parents, elders and the *wadaad* or sheikhs who have religious knowledge. All Somalis are taught to recite their ancestral family tree, based on the first names of the male ancestors. As Somalia is primarily an oral society, a love of poetry and narration is seen among the people. Poetry, drama and singing are very important aspects of Somali culture (Hasan, 1995). These aspects of the culture have continued abroad. Somali writers, musicians and poets have produced work and they perform live in Britain at Somali functions and in national venues.

A lot of history and culture are learnt from poetry and the lyrics of popular songs. This all

occurs in a society where the language has only existed in a written form for half a century and where the literacy rate is very low. Samatar (1982) stated that Somali pastoral verse serves as an archival repository and a vehicle of socialisation in the lives of Somalis. Somalis preferred to talk about events rather than write them down for posterity. Therefore literacy did not hold a prominent position in society.

4.7 Women at War

Mohamed Sahnoun (1994) the former UN special representative described Somalia in 1992 as a country without any central, regional or local administration and without services- no electricity, schools, transport or health services. Given this scenario which has shown little improvement since 1992, what part have Somali women played in the war?

Some Somali women from the Ogaden region were guerrillas in the Western Somali Liberation Front and women from Eritrea fought in their war against Ethiopia. Women also demonstrated against the regime of Siad Barre in the North. Some women soldiers, prison officers, customs, police and immigration officers were also arrested during the war and separated from their families and children. Many were tortured, kidnapped, beaten and raped (Gassem, 1994).

Traditionally, women were under the protection of their parents' and their husbands' clans (Samatar, 1995). Their dual clan membership enabled them to play go-between roles during wars or conflicts. Women from one clan, but who had close links with another clan for example, by marriage were often used by the elders to initiate peace discussions (Olsson, 1994). However, these traditional structures have broken down during the war as women lost their husbands, fathers, uncles and sons.

Women then became heads of their households. They had to feed, clothe and bring up their children and relatives by themselves. In times of war such responsibility is difficult due to the scarcity of resources, but women were able to travel more freely than men during the war. Many women eked out a living as petty traders but they were subjected to rapes and robberies by armed bandits. Rape has serious consequences for women in Somali society as they are often considered outcasts and unable to marry (Samatar, 1995). Approximately 300,000 Somalis fled into Northern Kenya to escape from the violence of the civil war between 1991-

1993. The majority of these refugees who settled in camps in Northern Kenya were women and children (over 80 percent).

In 1993, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) documented close to 300 rape cases. 100 of these cases had occurred in Somalia and the rest in the Kenyan refugee camps. With under-reporting of rape cases the actual figures could be ten times as high. In numerous cases women were violently attacked at night by unknown-armed bandits in their huts, or when they went to collect firewood or to herd the goats on the outskirts of the refugee camp. Women as old as fifty years of age and girls as young as four have been subjected to violent sexual assault and many women have been gang-raped on several occasions at gunpoint. The women have also been severely beaten, shot and knifed. Women who were circumcised had their vaginal openings torn or cut open with knives by their rapists. The women also suffered ongoing medical problems. Somali women refugees who are victims of rape face rejection by their families due to the stigma of rape in addition to the physical and psychological trauma of rape. Many women only go to a doctor if they have other injuries after being beaten, shot or knifed and then they will not tell the doctor they have been raped. When a rapist is identified as another refugee, the families may negotiate compensation, “blood money” with the rapist’s family through the elders (Human Rights Watch, 1995).

26 per cent of participants in this study had spent time in refugee camps before seeking asylum in Britain. The time spent in the camps varied from between a few months to three years with the average stay being one year.

Women have played active roles in the quests for peace by organising demonstrations for peace in Mogadishu and Hargeisa. Women have generally taken on larger roles in supporting their families than prior to the war and this change in role has been accepted in the society. In post-war Somalia, women’s non-governmental organisations (NGOs) supported by international agencies have flourished. These local women’s NGOs are working to promote a public role for women. Women are working in the Somaliland administration as employees and there was a female minister who was expelled before her term of office was over. Women have posts at decision-making level in the administration established by Mogadishu based factions (e.g. vice-director of the presidency) (Bryden, 1998).

Many women have led their families into exile and have made new lives for themselves in refugee camps and other countries of settlement. The Somali migration to Britain in the 1960s and 1970s was mostly made up of students and the families of Somali seamen in the British Merchant Navy who were coming to join their husbands. The Somali migration since 1988 had been mainly asylum seekers.

4.8 Conclusion

Somalis are by tradition pastoral nomads in the North and agricultural cultivators in the South. The country is located in the horn of Africa and it is run on a patrilineal system with six main clans. Somalia was colonised by Britain and Italy and it achieved independence in 1960. There was a military coup in 1969 and the country descended into civil war in 1988 with thousands killed and hundreds of thousands sent into exile as refugees. Anarchy still reigns in the South with various factions controlling different parts of the country. Women's roles have changed as a result of the war. Many women are now responsible for their households. Women have low literacy rates and marriage played a major role in a woman's life. It marked the removal of her circumcision sutures and the beginning of her life as a wife and mother. There is no doubt that the war changed how a woman's role was perceived in Somali society. These changes in gender relations have continued in exile in Britain.

The British developed the education system in northern Somalia and the Italians in southern Somalia. Somali girls were not routinely sent to school. There were high female dropout rates after primary school because it is expected that girls would get married early and the husband would provide for his wife's maintenance. During the colonial period the girls that were educated did not proceed beyond elementary level. Koranic schools were the main form of education that existed before the colonial period. Somalis who received higher education at this period were sent abroad to study on scholarships. The Italians developed further and higher education systems in the south. Educational enrolment in Somalia grew rapidly in the 1970s after the introduction of an agreed Latin script for the Somali language and the mass literacy campaign. Somalis have a rich oral heritage and tradition.

Chapter 5

THE HOUSEHOLD AND THE FAMILY

This chapter will discuss whether women have greater or lesser control over marriage, divorce, sexuality, and division of labour and resources and household decision-making in the UK, and if so, how this relates to a Somali woman's autonomy¹.

The household of family members is the place where the majority of refugee and migrant women spend most of their time. The relationships, narrow and wide, can affect all aspects of women's and men's lives from the cradle to the grave. The private world of the family defines and determines a woman's status, education, socialisation, sexuality and the behaviour expected of her as a daughter, wife, mother and carer (O'Connell, 1994). The policy of governments in the areas of childcare, education, social services, health, and taxation are all influenced by and in turn influence what happens within families. This chapter also examines how gender is constructed and reconstituted within the Somali social and cultural system in London.

Somali women come to Britain from a society and culture without equal opportunities legislation (Samatar, 1988), a society where a woman's status is linked to her role in the family as a wife, mother or daughter and is part of the culture and religion. A Somali woman's access to education and economic independence² in Britain has the potential to increase her autonomy. However, I found empirical evidence that suggested women were limited in their freedom to choose because of unwritten cultural frameworks that governed Somali women's behaviour. There is also the sense of alienation and racism they felt from the host culture and society in common with many racial minority British and migrant women, – but there are some Somali specificities.

¹Indicators of a woman's autonomy ("control" over key aspects of their lives) can be culturally specific but overall categories are decision making, resources, self-reliance and "choice" (Kabeer, 1999).

²Access to economic independence refers to any source of income a woman has access to including waged employment, social security payments, savings and income from credit unions. Access to education refers to formal education such as adult training and education opportunities and informal education in religious settings and in homes.

Feminist researchers have produced evidence to demonstrate that men have power over women in the home (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982; Delphy and Leonard, 1992). The control over women's sexuality has traditionally been practised in the family as well as in the public sphere, which remains an area where men's control over women is still dominant (Pascall, 1997). Married Somali women on social security who are registered as single parents (but who have husbands in London) have to endure enquiries about their babies' fathers because of their single status. While they suffer embarrassment due to the shame of having to present themselves as single mothers (the lowest of the low in their culture), they also have more autonomy to decide how the marriage proceeds.

Women's role in marriage and motherhood emphasises their importance to family life. Earlier feminist writers have examined women's roles as housewives and mothers and the role of the state in formulating social policy, which reinforces women's domestic roles (Oakley, 1987). Others have looked at the unequal division of labour within the household and how women still have the major responsibility for housework (Delphy and Leonard, 1992). Some conservative pro-family feminist perspectives have celebrated motherhood and reproduction and other radical feminists have sought to free women from being tied to the kitchen sink and childcare (Stacey, 1986). There are also diverse family types that cross ethnicity, social and cultural backgrounds. Black feminists argued that the family was a source of support and solidarity within a racist and sexist society. They criticised the tendency of white feminists to see the family only as the site of women's oppression (Bhavnani and Coulson, 1986). The chapter contains sections on marriage, divorce, sexuality, division of labour and resources—household decision making because these are areas that affect a Somali woman's family life. The next section considers marriage and women's autonomy.

5.1 Marriage

Life outside the home is affected by the internal cultural, religious and social life within the family. The new way of life in Britain is beset by problems of adjusting to settlement in a country that has a different language, religion, culture and social system. There are conflicts for women between their cultural values and racism in the society (Afshar, 1994). As a visible minority with a different cultural framework than the dominant group, in a country where racism belittles differences, migrant families tend to strengthen their traditions and customs. Migrant women have to tread a tightrope of double identities, double values and double standards. Families feel the impact of life as a refugee and migrant most keenly when changes begin to take place within the home. Hitherto, unquestioned values and the hierarchy within the family begin to be questioned. Women who previously did not undertake paid work outside the home begin to do so, to increase their family's financial income levels but it also gives them direct access to cash. Men, who were the head of the household, now have to contend with some power sharing with their wives and changes in gender relations in Britain. Children often act as interpreters for their parents because they have absorbed the new culture and language more quickly and gain power in relation to parents. The loss of traditional support systems also means more work for refugee women in the home (Bonnerjea, 1985).

There are diverse family types and patterns even in indigenous British households, which can range from the large extended, through nuclear, to single parent family to the matriarchal, patriarchal, homosexual, stepfamily and occasional polygamous family in the Muslim community. Feminist studies on the family have demonstrated that the notion of the family as a unit, of conjugal relations as complimentary, and of motherhood as a biological function emanated from a patriarchal perspective (Gamarnikow, 1983). The Somali household is normatively patriarchal and motherhood is regarded as a biological function. The Muslim family is ideally characterised by the extended family of three or more generations living together, although migration and family reunion have changed this feature in Britain to commonly ideally only two generations (Anwar 1981).

In order to answer the question 'do Somali women feel they have control over whether and whom they marry?', it is useful to look first at the traditional approach to marriage and then

the current changes taking place in Britain. The tradition for marriage has been for the man to make known his interest to the woman either directly or through intermediaries and for the woman to respond through the same channels (see chapter 4).

Participants in Britain with lower educational levels tended to adopt a more conservative approach to marriage. Madina approves of the traditional arranged marriage system.

It is not part of our culture for a girl to bring her intended husband to her family. When a girl has reached marriageable age, a man will come to ask for her hand in marriage. It is not good for a girl to say to her family, this is my boyfriend. The way marriage is conducted in our culture is better, when the man comes to ask for the girl. (1)³

We have seen how racism in society makes migrants cling to 'traditions', which may be 'reconstructed' (see chapter 2) especially regarding marriage. The question is how long these traditions will last, because some women's autonomy has enabled them to have boyfriends and to introduce them to their families when they are ready to get married. Many Somali families in Britain are aware that their daughters will (be able to) make a decision about who and whether to marry, whereas arranged marriage is the norm in Somalia. Somali women in Britain are getting married later than was the tradition in Somalia due to their education. Among the married participants there were 32 per cent of participants who got married between the ages of 17-21. 18 per cent got married between the ages of 22-27. 2 per cent got married between the ages of 28-33 and no one got married after 34 years of age.

Most participants with further and higher level education adopted a more progressive and realistic attitude towards their children's marriage prospects in Britain. Other participants stressed that it is preferable for women to choose their own marriage partners (the expectation was that the partners should be Muslim see chapter 6) because there will be more commitment to the marriage. Fardosa explains why she is against arranged marriage.

When you force a girl to get married to a man through arranged marriage, there is always the possibility of incompatibility or she might have had another lover at the time this marriage was arranged. In that case, it is very difficult for the couple to live together and remain married. Her heart could be somewhere else. In that case it is just bringing two people together. It is not marriage. It is better if the girl chooses her husband. (35)

³ The numbers after quotations refer to characteristics of the participants in appendix I

Fardosa's response reveals the more 'enlightened' approach to marriage in Britain among participants with further and higher levels of education. Fardosa supports women having autonomy in marriage.

Heema shed some light on the conduct of marriage in Somali culture. She explained that culturally some Somalis have always chosen their own marriage partners through elopement. This is a traditionally accepted method of avoiding arranged marriage and finding their autonomy.

Yes, I think in the Somali culture, although arranged marriages and parental consent and all these things are important, it is culturally accepted that any person, boy or girl as long as they are fifteen, have a right to choose who they want and this was practised through elopement. **The vast majority** of Somali nomads eloped so as to implement their right to choose who they want. And it was socially acceptable, the family might be a little angry for a little while, but it was accepted in social terms. It was (either regarded as) prostitution or it was not in that category. It was a right.
(37) (my stress)

Many families accepted elopement. The elopers were eventually reunited with the families. There is thus a large loophole in Somali culture that allows young people to choose their marriage partners. According to Simons (1995) elopement or *masafo* was indeed used quite frequently for similar reasons by couples in Somalia. Namely to avoid paying *yarad* (bride wealth) or more commonly to help a couple to elude parental disapproval or the first wife's refusal to permit her husband's intent to marry a second wife. *Masafo* marriages were technically ceremonies conducted in secret with sheikhs and a *meher* payment was arranged. Normally, friends of the bride and groom witnessed the secret ceremony. The secrecy of *masafo* marriages is normally kept until the woman's pregnancy gives it away or the groom's admission and less by the revelation of friends or relatives.

Women also have the right, according to Islamic law to refuse a prospective marriage partner who is introduced to them by their family. However, some women may feel pressurised into accepting an arranged marriage in Somalia because of their family circumstances such as poverty, their lack of education or inability to live independent lives. In Europe, it is more through parental or peer pressure that well educated women would succumb to marriage.

Arranged marriages are part of Somali culture and 38 per cent of participants supported arranged marriages. There are degrees of arranged marriages e.g. most women will not date men openly in the western fashion because it was not acceptable in the culture in Somalia for a woman to say she had a boyfriend. However, most women in Somalia will meet with their prospective husband secretly. Then the man's family would approach the woman's family to request their daughter's hand in marriage. In many traditional families in Somalia a man would approach the father to request the hand in marriage of his daughter and if the father was agreeable the daughter would be asked to marry the man. If she refused then she was not compelled to accept the marriage proposal.

Women in arranged marriages have a lack of autonomy. Filsan explains why she is against arranged marriages,

Why I don't support arranged marriage is that because arranged marriage is the marriage that your father, your family will arrange with a husband's family and their negotiation for the money. And you see, no one is thinking, do you like that man? Did he like you? Are you going to live together? Are you going to be in your family? How is he? Even you don't know each other. You don't know his character. Is he going to be a good man or not? Because marrying someone is not that you are going to be his property. Because it is to share a life with him, you have to know each other. So it is better if you as two persons meet each other, decide for your marriage. Then after that, you can respect your family and say okay, I want to marry this man. But I don't agree with arranged marriages, totally it is something wrong, because your family is not going to marry that family. It is you who are going to marry this man, so you have to know him well. (9)

According to Filsan a woman is not a commodity to be bartered over by the two families and coerced into marriage, which often happens if a family is poor. Filsan feels couples could meet up outside the home in friends homes. She believes women should make their own decision about whether and who to marry because they are the one's who are going to live with the man. It appears that many women had little say in traditionally arranged marriages because the case was already signed, sealed and delivered. Women felt they had to go along with their family's decision for financial reasons e.g. because of the money involved and the difference it would make to their family's lives. The arranged marriage removes a woman's autonomy because although a woman's consent had to be obtained for the marriage to be valid, there is covert coercion in many cases. It was customary in Somalia for sisters to be married in age order. So a younger sister would have to get married

after her older sister. A man might see a woman in the street and enquire who she was. Then he would send his family to make a marriage proposal. He might be offered an older sister in marriage if the woman he wanted to marry had an unmarried older sister. This practice is no longer prevalent in Somalia because it could jeopardise the marriage prospects of many women (in case the man refused the older sister and they all lost out).

Nuur believed arranged marriages worked better with her mother's generation than with her own generation. Somali women have more autonomy in Britain that enables them to make their own decisions about marriage.

For the young girls I am talking about, the young girls when they come to England they change quite a lot as well. They forget about everything, they just forget that they are Somalian, and they have got their religion, and you know things like that. When they come here they just have that freedom. They think that they can have whatever style they like, they can go to disco every night, they can marry whomever they like.

Yes, I think arranged marriages can be a problem. Because if the person doesn't like the person and the marriage is for life, so you shouldn't actually push the person or pressure the person to marry that person. I think it is quite wrong, because the person is going to live with the person, is the person you are telling them to get married to that person. So I think it is quite difficult. And I don't agree with that.

And arranged marriages, it can be good, if you arrange them for a better person, who is quite a good person it can work. That is what happened to my mother's or the older generation. They used to get married to the person that they don't know but it worked. So it has its advantages as well. It could work or it cannot work. But I think the younger generation, they should choose their own one, and they should get to know the person before they get married. And know the person what he is like and everything. Arranged marriages are not that easy. Nowadays it is quite difficult. That is my opinion. (13)

Nuur acknowledges that young women in Britain should make a choice about marriage partners and whether to marry. She does not refer to the reasons why women of her mother's generation agreed to arranged marriages, and how the only alternative was for women without any education to become domestic servants or prostitutes. Nuur is unhappy that many young women are not practising their culture and religion regarding marriage and women's modesty. Nuur presents a paradox because on the one hand she wants women to accept arranged marriages but she acknowledges the problems they can bring. Arranged marriages with the woman's consent were common in the past. Now, many younger

women prefer to find their own marriage partners. Many participants accept this as a realistic option. Families in Britain have less control over the choice of marriage partners for their daughters. There is evidence to support the argument that Somali women are having more autonomy regarding choice of marriage partner and whether to marry. The nature of marriage has also changed in Britain due to migration. More women are looking to their husband's for emotional support because of the absence of the extended family. Marriage is now more individualised (between the couple as opposed to communal and involving the whole family) in Britain, especially when women are living on their own without their immediate family.

The changes in approaches to arranged marriages are important because marriage is the cornerstone of Muslim families. If a woman marries out of her religion and culture then it is regarded as a loss to the continuation of the family, religion and culture. More women are making their own decisions about marriage, even if they meet their future husband through their parents. In the following three cases I will illustrate a range of approaches to Somali marriages in Britain.

Case 5a

Ramla is an undergraduate aged 25 who came to Britain in 1990 with her mother and siblings. Her father is a businessman who remained behind in Somalia because of his business interests and patriotism. He secured false passports and visas for his family to travel to Britain. She is the eldest of 8 children, three boys and five girls. She finished secondary school in Britain and she attended a college where she did her BTEC course, which enabled her to enter university. Ramla is now in her mid-twenties and in her final year at university. Her mother Sudi (with primary school level education) is keen for her eldest daughter Ramla to get married. Ramla practises her religion, she prays five times a day and she wears the hijab. She knows her mum wants her to set a good example to her younger sisters, so she is happy to oblige her mother's efforts to find her a husband. Several young Somali men at college had approached Ramla but she rebuffed all of them because she wanted to finish her studies and start working. Eventually she changed her mind and she encouraged one Somali man called Ahmed whom she met through friends to approach her family. His father met with Ramla's mother Sudi and her uncles and other kinsmen to start the betrothal. Ramla gave her consent to the marriage and she was married in her home to Ahmed.

A Somali Muslim sheikh performed the marriage ceremony where only the groom and his male relatives and the bride's male relatives were present. The women sat in another room, cooked food and decorated the bride with henna and gold jewellery.

After the brief ceremony the men sat down to eat rice and goat meat. They later chewed khat and drank tea in the men's room. The women gathered together in another room and they ate, sang, danced and blessed the married couple. Many Somalis saw this ceremony as an engagement although it is a legal marriage in Islamic law because the *meher* has been agreed. Ramla was engaged for about six months and in this time she finished her degree. Her fiancé found a job and rented a flat. He saved up for the wedding and they hired a large international hotel in central London for the reception. A few weeks before the reception Ramla had her infibulation stitches removed at a local hospital because after the wedding reception she would start living with her husband. The bride wore white and she had bridesmaids. The wedding reception had a live Somali band and it was video taped, speeches were made and prayers were offered for the couple's future happiness and fecundity.

Sudi breathed a sigh of relief because she had successfully married off one of her daughters. She was keen to ensure her eldest daughter was married early because of the worries caused by having an unmarried adult daughter in Britain. Ramla was happy to be married and she enjoyed being a mentor to her younger sisters. She wanted to follow her religion too because Islam encourages Muslim women to marry Muslim men. She respected her husband and he was a fellow graduate who came from a good home. He was religious, a hard worker and he did not drink, smoke or chew khat unlike many of his contemporaries.

It was Ramla's mother who set up the marriage because her father is not in Britain. He approved of it, but her mother was the main mover and shaker, making the relevant enquiries of Ahmed's family such as their social background, character, health etc. Clan affiliation is an important consideration in Somali marriages and Ramla's mother has forged structural links between kinship groups. Women's ability to set up these links has contributed to their increased power in the family (Nelson, 1997). The subsequent marriages of Ramla's sisters have been made easier because of the links between the two clans. Ramla was highly educated and she accepted an arranged marriage with someone her family approved of. She did not date her husband in the conventional sense and the courtship was conducted through visits to the family home and the occasional chaperoned outing. She liked Ahmed and was happy to accept his proposal. Generally, there is more of an acceptance that women will choose their own husbands but with the approval of their family. If Ramla had not been living with her family she might have had more autonomy to choose when she got married. Her mother was clearly worried about her daughters' reputations. If a daughter is promiscuous her mother will be blamed. It will affect the marriage opportunities of the other sisters and close female relatives in other parts of the world and in Somalia, because of the swiftness of communication between the Somali

diaspora. The effects of traditions and power which operate across multiple sites in a diaspora can be simultaneously oppressive, repressive or suppressive and it can establish hierarchies of domination (Brah, 1996). The Somalia based sisters may be shunned by prospective bridegrooms because of the promiscuous behaviour of their London based sister. Or other younger sisters may be tightly chaperoned, more strictly policed or be married off early to avoid them obtaining a sullied reputation.

Ramla and her sisters are circumcised so she had her infibulation stitches removed before the wedding night by her doctor's practice nurse. Most government hospitals and clinics in Britain will conduct this operation at the request of the women. Some Somali women do become pregnant before the wedding with the infibulation stitches intact and the stitches then have to be removed before childbirth. Ramla's acceptance of arranged marriage is not untypical of someone from her family's urban middle-class background in Britain. The reality of life as an asylum seeker in Britain meant that marriage was an opportunity for many Muslim women to leave their birth family and to acquire their own household and hence more power over their lives (Afshar, 1994). This approach to marriage also supports the view that Somali women were careful to avoid criticisms from traditionalists that could result in social ostracism from their families (El Solh, 1993).

Case 5b

Zahra, aged 20 was a Somali woman from a rural nomadic background. She did not have any formal education and she did not speak English. Her father gave her in marriage in Somalia to a man seeking asylum in Britain. The man was called Abdul and he had lived in Britain for seven years. Abdul returned home to Somalia to look for a bride because he believed that Somali women in Britain were too aggressive and promiscuous. He had asked a few newly arrived Somali women in Britain to marry him but he had been rejected due to his rural origins and lack of a formal education. These women regarded him as an uneducated, rural nomad. Then he went back on holiday to Somalia once he received his British travel documents. Abdul approached a former neighbour of his family who had several daughters in a rural area of northern Somalia. He knew he was a good catch because of his British residency. He had saved up for years for his marriage by taking agency unskilled and manual work in factories in London.

Abdul was pleased with his wife Zahra. He believed she would look up to him and respect him because of the new life he was offering her in Britain. He stayed in Somalia for six months. The formal part of their Islamic marriage was completed in three months but he had not slept with his wife. She was circumcised and they

planned to have a wedding reception upon her arrival in London. Abdul returned to London and arranged for his wife's visa after producing his wedding certificate and other relevant documents. After one year he sent Zahra her ticket and visa. Zahra arrived in London and she immediately kicked up a fuss with Abdul. She complained about him constantly to her clan's people in London. She met up with some of her clan's women and she saw how the women worked and shared a flat. She was impressed by their freedom of movement and independence. Eventually Zahra requested a divorce from Abdul and she moved out of his house. Abdul was devastated and requested a reconciliation and mediation to no avail. So he reluctantly agreed to a divorce. He threatened to inform the immigration authorities about their divorce and she would then be deported. However, he did not carry out his threat because Zahra threatened to inform on his own dubious state of affairs to the social security office.

This case is not uncommon in the Somali community. Some women without formal education agree to marriage in order to migrate to Europe for a brighter socio-economic future. Women like Zahra want to work and send money to their family and they want their autonomy too.

Case 5c

Medina, aged 18 came to Britain with her older sister Anisa. Anisa was registered as Medina's mother on their false black market passports although there was only a ten-year age gap. Anisa had four children aged between 5 to 10 years old. Anisa had been married at the age of 15 to a 35-year-old man who was a good husband. Anisa's husband remained behind in Somalia due to financial difficulties. They only had enough money to secure false passports and tickets for Anisa, the children and for Medina. Anisa thought that Medina would help her with childcare and housework in London as she did in Somalia. Medina enrolled in college and made friends with other Somali women students. Anisa did not have any formal education, but Medina had finished secondary school in Somalia.

Medina started staying out late and neglecting her household chores. Anisa informed her father of Medina's behaviour and they decided to find a husband for Medina in Somalia. Medina by now had met a Jamaican man called Sam at college and she became pregnant. When Anisa learned of the pregnancy she disowned Medina and asked her to leave the home. There was no way any Somali man would marry Medina. When she told Sam about the pregnancy he asked her to move in with him and his family. Medina did this and she had the baby. Sam converted to Islam and he married Medina after the birth of the baby. Medina was ostracised by Somalis who gossiped about her.

This case shows that some Somali women do marry foreigners, some of whom convert to Islam. Such cases are far and few between. But they are on the increase. There are also

cases of single unmarried mothers, but these are even less common. Women who become pregnant generally get married to the father of the baby. The stigma attached to illegitimacy is very strong and the fact that most women are circumcised, have access to contraception and that many women are able to divorce at will limits such cases. As a participant observer I only knew about two cases of Somali women marrying foreigners in London but it is more common for Somali men to marry foreigners. Some families may not want to share the news when their daughters marry foreigners.

More Somali women in Britain with higher and further education levels in their late twenties were accepting arranged marriages than previously, as the case 5a illustrated because of pressure for young women not to remain unmarried after their studies. Among my participants 38 per cent of participants with different education levels supported arranged marriages. More women were getting married after their further/higher education was completed and mothers were happy about this. They breathed a sigh of relief after the marriage because they felt their daughters got the best of both worlds, an excellent education and a secure arranged marriage. Many families in Britain have influence over the marriage prospects of Somali women graduates. A woman has to carefully negotiate her autonomy in order not to offend her family's expectations regarding marriage.

The Somali arranged marriage is an agreement between two families and it needs the consent of both partners involved. Participants informed me that Somali men in Britain are keen to snap up the newly arrived women before they become too immersed in the supposed 'freedom' of life in Britain. From my discussions with participants the view emerged that some young women led a double life. They appear to follow traditionally accepted modest codes of dress and behaviour while surreptitiously engaging in dates and flirtations (*shukansi*) with men. Their infibulation technically does not allow them to have full sexual intercourse but there have been many quick weddings because of pregnancies resulting from sexual foreplay. One UK born participant has refused several marriage proposals because she was determined to find her own husband, but she is afraid of her parents not being happy with her choice of partner because of the need for him to be Somali and Muslim. Somali women are treading a fine line between using their autonomy in choice of marriage partner and pleasing their parents. Many are able to keep their family satisfied while

pursuing education and a career and choosing an acceptable marriage partner or acquiescing to their family's choice of spouse. Some women even succumb to arranged marriages because of peer pressure i.e. their close friends are getting married and in Somali culture a single woman in her thirties is pitied and regarded as being on-the-shelf. This finding is different from Bhopal's (1999) study of South Asian women and arranged marriages. She found that education levels affected women's attitudes to arranged marriages. Highly educated South Asian women found arranged marriages oppressive and they used their education to secure employment to become self-sufficient.

The divorce rate among Somalis in Britain is high and the next section explores why this might be so.

5.2 Divorce

This section considers the factors affecting a woman's ability to file for divorce because prior to migration men had more grounds to divorce than women did. The stigma that used to be attached to divorce has been weakened. This is due in part to the high divorce rate caused by the instability in familial relationships as a result of the war (Summerfield, 1993).

Many women initiated divorces in Britain whereas it was the opposite in Somalia. The participants revealed that in traditional Somali culture the following five factors were grounds for men to divorce their wives but not vice versa: a) theft b) adultery c) socialising too much d) being a spendthrift and e) nagging. In Britain some men are trying to use these reasons for divorce but women are not disadvantaged by divorce because they are able to keep the children and stay in the marital home unlike in Somalia. Some Somali husbands have single Somali girlfriends who have their own flats so the men can run away from the chaos and noise of their marital homes.

Women ended the marriage if the husband was not fulfilling his marital obligations. Therefore, he was in breach of the marriage contract. For example, a wife is entitled to food, shelter, clothing and fair treatment by her husband under Islamic law (Tames, 1982). However, due to unemployment the husband may not be providing these basic elements of maintenance and fairness. The state now provides them in the form of income support and

housing benefit. Mernissi (1985) argues that the state is the main threat to the traditional function of the husband as head of the family. This is because the state provides free education and economic security for unemployed household members, although at a low level. In many instances, women received income support in their own right. Basically most women were no longer dependant on men financially and physically in Britain. Bradshaw and Millar's study (1991) found that some lone mothers prefer to be alone than married because they have control over their resources and they enjoyed their independence. Also Wilson's (1977) work shows that poor women cannot afford the economic drain of a husband.

Summerfield (1993) stated that a cause of Somali women's mental strength was a certain independence and control over one's destiny and this included being able to end a marriage, unlike the Bangladeshi Muslim women she also studied. The two communities live side-by-side in East London but their cultural practices are very different despite the fact that both groups are Muslim with low education rates for women. The ability to divorce provides Somali women with some autonomy over their lives, because they are no longer virgins whose virginity has to be guarded by the family. Somali divorcees are also able to remarry quite easily (El-Solh, 1993). Most Somalis use Islamic law to conduct marriages and divorces in Britain within their own community. They do not use the British legal system for marriage and divorce (see chapter 6).

Somali women in London are increasingly initiating marital separations. These women were judged by some participants to be uneducated women who were tasting freedom for the first time and who went to extremes. Samiya believes it is uneducated, unemployed women who are getting divorced.

The one's without education, and the one's who are on welfare and are leaving their husband's. (39)

Many women knew they were able to choose when to terminate a union and this knowledge gave them more autonomy in a relationship. Some couple's families contribute to domestic problems through gossip. For example, some mothers are not happy that their sons are doing housework and they malign their daughters-in-law. This can also lead to the wives requesting divorces when the situation becomes intolerable. I believe women do not

accurately prejudge the economic and social effects of divorce. However, because Somali women are able to remarry, divorce is not seen as the end of the world. The field of suitable partners is not as wide as in Somalia for divorcees, so some people do search the Somali diaspora outside Britain for Somali spouses. Men in search of a bride would use their friends and relatives in other countries to be on the look out for a suitable Somali woman they could marry. I am aware of a man living in America who found a bride living in Britain through friends and family contacts in London. There is a divorced Somali woman in London with three children who got married to a divorced Somali man resident in Germany. They met through mutual friends. Both parties will remain resident in their respective countries due to immigration restrictions (until these are lifted) on the woman's movement but the man visits his London based wife and stepchildren regularly and they have had a baby.

Samiya describes how in-laws intervention can lead to divorce.

The family creates problems between the woman and the husband, due to cultural differences and then at the end they divorce. (39)

The extended family used to settle domestic quarrels between couples before it reached the stage of divorce in Somalia, but this facility is not available in Britain for most women. There are higher divorce rates in Britain often between couples that have been together for many years. Gossip between women is also another contributor towards marriage breakdown.

The women are complaining that their husbands do not help them, that they do not bring any maintenance to the home, they are away all night, then they quarrel and they ask the men to leave the marital home. The divorce rate is very high here. It is the older men who are grandfathers who are getting divorced in London, not only the young men. Divorce was considered very serious in Somalia. The extended family used to settle quarrels in Somalia but this support system is not available in London. The women threaten to dial 999 if the men upset them. The women who have come here have changed, there is a lot of gossip between women and this can wreck marriages. (38)

The women's network, (a female solidarity group) can offer emotional support through telephone calls and visits, but long geographical distances can deter the frequency of visits. The clan kinship system also substitutes for the extended family but its effectiveness is limited due to distance and women's increased financial independence. The increase in

women's autonomy has led to more demands for divorce even among couples that have been married for a long time.

Divorce has been linked with women having more freedom to move around out of the family home, and men feeling they have less control over their wives' movements (freedom of movement is discussed later on in this chapter). Women have the freedom to ignore cultural and religious practices and to seek to control their own sexual freedom. Women use the threat of telephoning the police to evict the man from the marital home as a precursor to separation and divorce. This threat is like a Damoclean sword that is hanging over the relationship. Women are obtaining more power in the family due to their ability to request a divorce, retain custody of the children and to stay in the marital home. Living in Britain has given women more control over their own sexuality and in the next section I will explore this phenomenon.

5.3 Sexuality

In this section, I will examine Somali women's attitude towards their own sexuality, how sexuality is constructed in Somali culture and how it affects a woman's autonomy. Definitions of sexuality have been debated widely among feminists, anthropologists, sociologists and sexologists. Earlier approaches referred to sexuality as a biological and psychological activity, which was linked to heterosexual coition. More recent approaches have emphasised the social and cultural construction of a whole range of human sexual activity (Foucault, 1981; Jackson and Scott, 1996). In this chapter, I am concerned about how Somali women view their sexuality and what it means to them. I found the following description of sexuality useful.

The term 'sexuality' is generally broader in meaning, encompassing erotic desires, practices and identities. Sometimes this term, too, is used to include our sense of ourselves as women or men... Sexuality is not limited to 'sex acts', but involves our sexual feelings and relationships, the ways in which we are or are not defined as sexual by others, as well as the ways in which we define ourselves.
(Jackson and Scott, 1996:2).

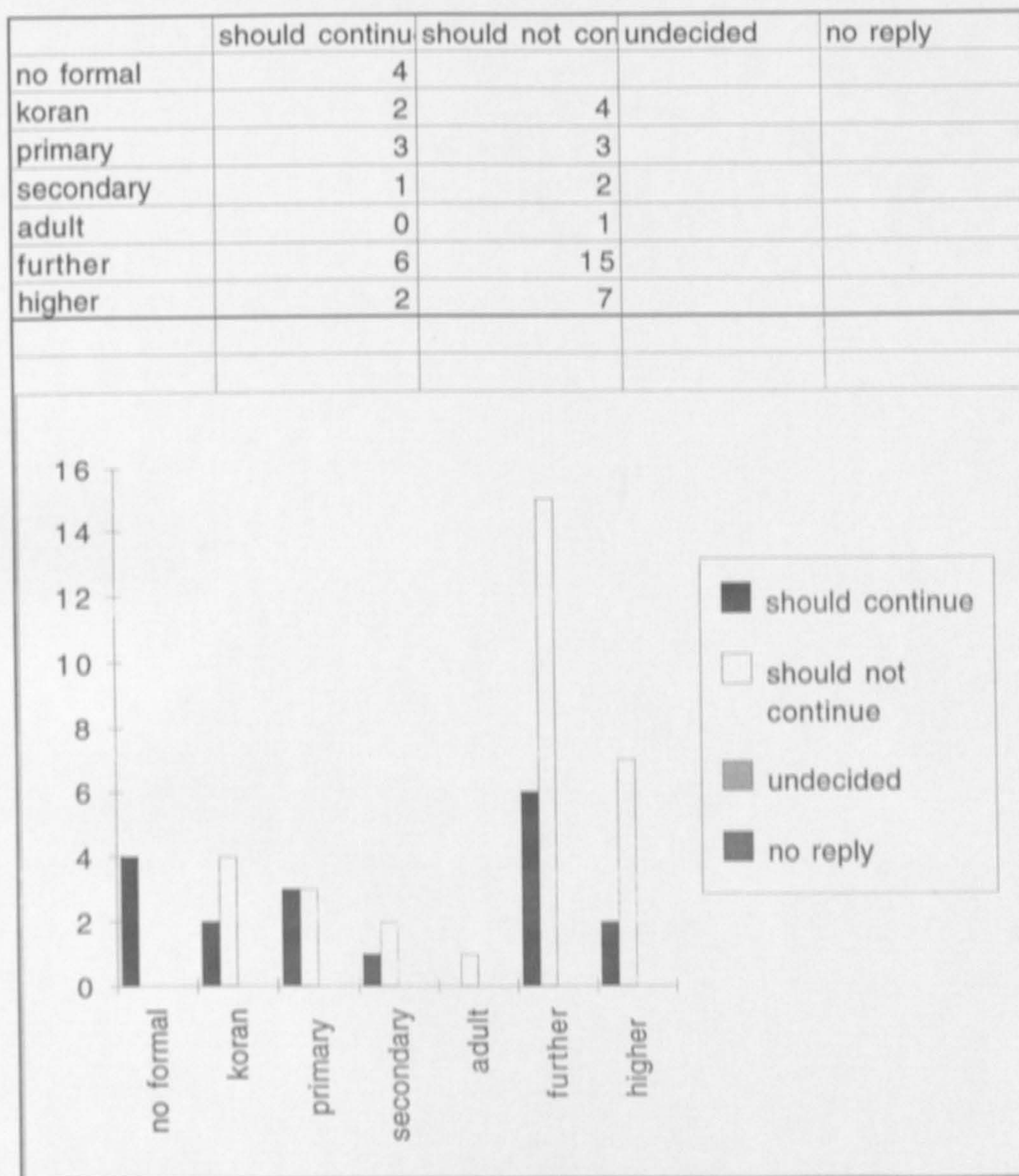
Black female sexuality has been subjected to racialised sexual stereotypes and imagery (Marshall, 1994). There is a need to understand the racialisation of the social construction

of black female sexuality because it impacted upon the participants from within and outside the Somali community.

The control over a woman's sexuality to ensure she retains her virginity is crucial to enabling a woman to make a good marriage. The main means of ensuring a Somali woman remained a virgin was through female circumcision (or Female Genital Cutting-FGC). There are single Somali women in Britain who have had their circumcision reversed (defibulation) often for medical reasons due to heavy and painful periods. Voluntary female defibulation is the ultimate form of rebellion a Somali woman can undertake. There are various groups that are for and against female circumcision that transcend clan affiliation and gender. There are men and women who believe in circumcision as an essential religious and cultural means of social control over women's sexuality. There are Somalis who belong to and support campaigning groups such as London Black Women's Health Action Project and African Women's Welfare Group, which stress the physical and psychological effects of FGC. There are others who acknowledge the dangers of the ritual, but who will not openly come out in support of the campaigns to eradicate FGC. They regard it as another form of western ethnocentrism and interference in the Somali community's internal affairs (El Solh, 1993).

As stated above female circumcision is a means Somalis use to control women's sexual freedom and to preserve virginity. In this study 64 per cent of participants said that Somali women should not circumcise their daughters. 64 per cent also gave health as the main reason why circumcision should not be carried out. 36 per cent of participants said that Somali women should circumcise their daughters. The following figure 5.1 shows the educational levels of participants who said female circumcision should be continued.

Figure 5.1 Views on Female Circumcision by education level



Among the responses of those who wanted female circumcision continued there were 18 per cent of participants who had secondary education and above and 18 per cent who had primary level of education or below. The majority of participants were aged between 18-41 who wanted it continued. There was also a wide range of age and education levels among this group. This indicates the vast spread and support for female genital cutting (FGC) across the variables of age and education. Of the 36 per cent who wanted the practice continued, 20 per cent gave religion as the reason why the practice should be continued but some recommended the Sunna version (clitoridectomy) as opposed to infibulation. 16 per cent of participants gave culture as a reason. It appears that living in Britain, where there have been campaigns against female circumcision has raised participants' awareness about the health risks involved in the practice. However, many participants still want to have the Sunna version instead of infibulation performed on their daughters. They refer to wanting to have a "snip" of the clitoris cut off to enable a drop of blood to be shed. This shows the influence of cultural and religious practices that are deeply embedded in many women despite the prevalence of education campaigns. On the other hand, these campaigns especially the television documentaries on FGC have led some women to speak out in defence of their cultural practices. Many participants believe that if a woman is circumcised she will be unable to engage in penetrative sexual intercourse. This is because a circumcised woman's vagina is stitched up with a small opening for urine and menstrual blood to flow through. However, some young circumcised women do have non-penetrative sexual intercourse and end up with unwanted pregnancies. The families of such women will put pressure on them to get married if possible. It is easier for the women who become pregnant to get married if the father of their unborn child is a Somali or a Muslim because the two families would share similar cultural values. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage is illegal in Islam. The shame of being an unmarried mother is strong and this deters many women from having sex outside marriage despite the availability of contraception. A woman's autonomy to have sex is curtailed through circumcision, fear of being shamed, social ostracism and peer pressure to conform.

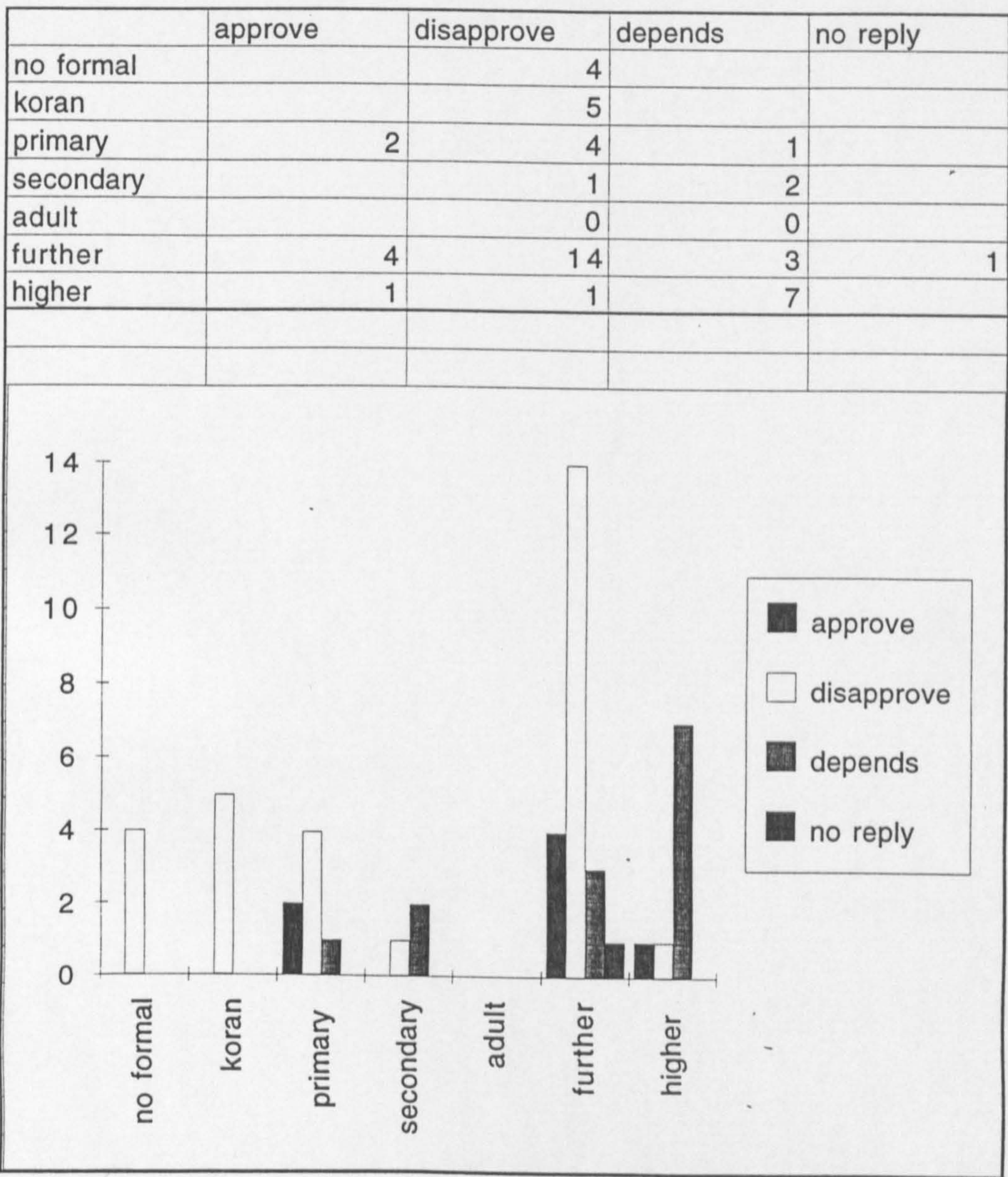
In Somali culture, daughters and female relatives are expected to live with their family until they get married (Somali Women's Association, 1987). Women who leave home to live

alone can acquire bad reputations because they are leaving the protection of their patriarchal family, father, mother and brothers. In Britain, this situation is gradually changing because of the refugee situation, where many young women are here without their families and they are setting up their own homes. However, while Islamic teachings on morality apply to both sexes, boys are forgiven for having girlfriends, dating, illicit sex, alcohol and gambling (Haw, 1998).

Within the Somali community the sexual preferences I came across were heterosexuality and celibacy. I did not come across anyone who said they were bisexual or homosexual during the course of the fieldwork. However, I came across anecdotal accounts of young Somali homosexuals and some lesbians. The lesbians were described as two women living together who said they were married to each other. The homosexual men were described as selling sex to men. Such sexual preferences would remain hidden due to the homophobia, which is prevalent within the Somali culture and the Muslim religion. Heterosexual marriage is a strong characteristic of the culture and the religion. In Somali culture married couples are not expected to display affection publicly. Many participants remarked on their surprise in Britain at seeing people kissing in public in the streets.

To assess participants' attitudes towards female sexuality I examined their responses to having boyfriends, accepting gifts, and female circumcision. I will analyse the responses to each in turn by reviewing them against education levels.

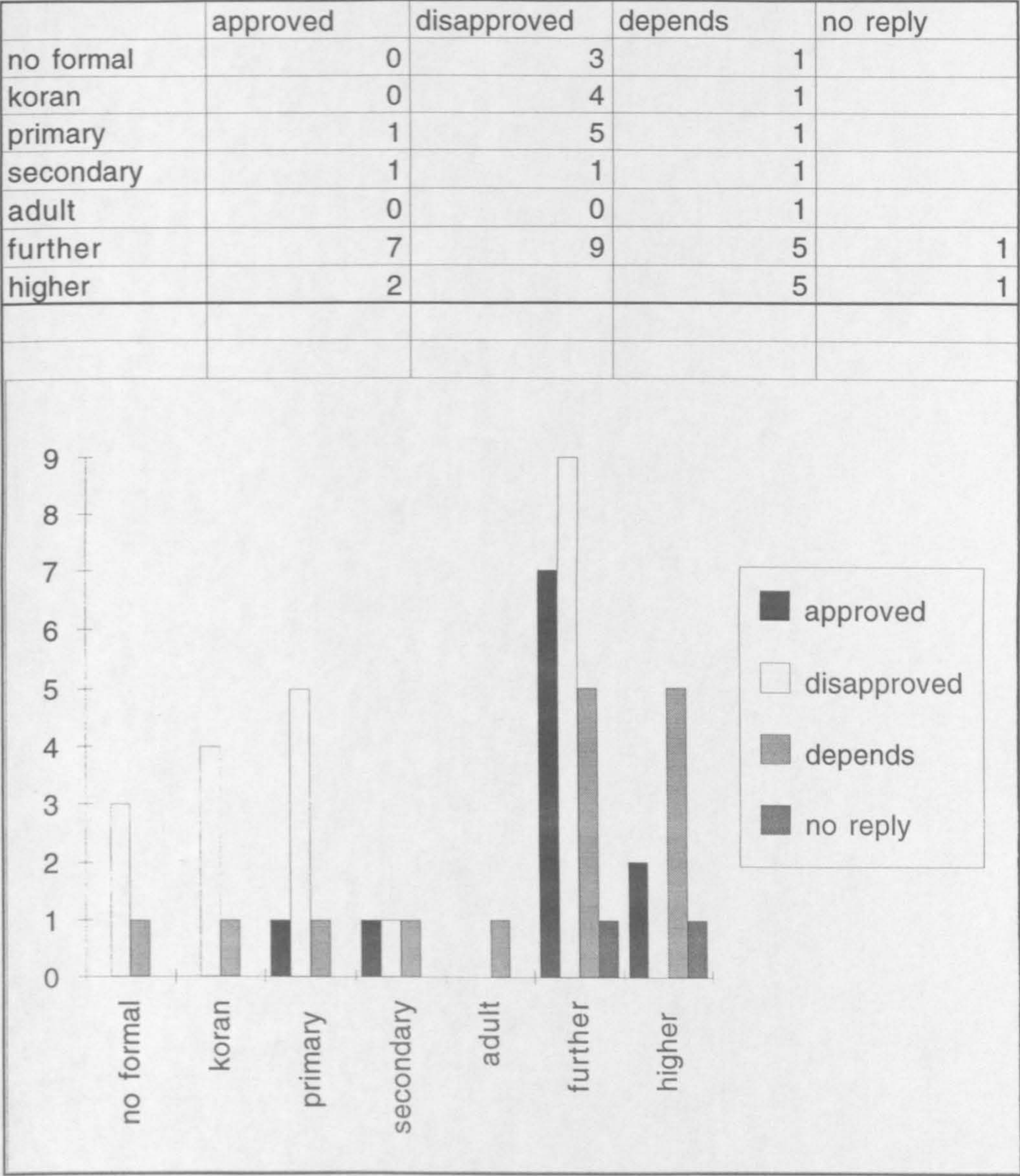
Figure 5.2 Views on Boyfriends by education level



In breaking down these responses I found there were mixed education levels of the 14 per cent who approved, 2 per cent had higher education, 8 per cent further education and 4 per cent primary levels. Of the 26 per cent who felt it depended on the circumstances, 12 per cent had higher education, 6 per cent further education, 4 per cent secondary, 2 per cent primary and 2 per cent adult education levels. The education levels are too varied to draw some direct correlations between linking education levels and responses and feelings around having boyfriends. However, the understanding of the question was not linked to marital status, i.e. participants (both single and married) felt it is unacceptable for both a single girl and a married woman to have boyfriends. In Somali culture, as in most Muslim societies, courtship and dating between men and women are not permitted. Young engaged couples are generally chaperoned to discourage pre-marital sex. The high response (48 per cent) of participants who disapproved of Somali women having boyfriends shows that this is not the customary practice of Somali people. A majority of participants who felt it depended on the circumstances had high levels of education, indicating a willingness to generally keep an open mind on boyfriends.

The response to the question whether women should accept gifts from men elicited the following responses from participants: 22 per cent approved, 44 per cent disapproved and 30 per cent felt it depended on the circumstances.

Figure 5.3 Views on receiving gifts by education level



Women with further education were the largest group that approved of women accepting gifts from men. This group are most likely to be single students in their twenties at college. They are also the group most likely to be offered gifts from men interested in courtship.

Women with further education and those with primary and koranic education levels were the largest groups who disapproved of women accepting gifts. This would indicate a conservative element that crosses education levels in this response. This response indicates a traditional approach that Muslim women should not date or socialise with unknown men.

Married women were the largest group of participants who disapproved of women accepting gifts. Single women were the second largest group who disapproved, this indicates a strong feeling among participants that it is not the norm for women to accept gifts.

The disapproval covered all age ranges because women aged between 18-over 50 were the ones who disapproved of women accepting gifts from men. There are younger women in their twenties and thirties who may be the likely recipients of such gifts. There are also older women who may be the mothers of these younger women and who are unlikely to support such actions because they do not want their daughters' reputations spoiled.

The circumstances when gifts are given could be during a religious festival such as Eid. Other factors could be how well the woman knew the man in question. In Somali culture presents are not generally exchanged between adults during birthdays, which are usually celebrated for children and not adults. Acceptance of gifts from a man to a single woman could denote an interest that could end in a marriage proposal. In these circumstances the woman would show her own interest in the man if she accepted his gifts. It also depended on the value or type of gift. For example, women are more likely to accept smaller gifts such as watches, small items of jewellery and electronic goods than larger ones and cash gifts without feeling compromised. There is also an undercurrent of flirtation in many of these

relationships.

There were more women with further education (FE) levels, and more single women than married women who approved of gifts. There were more women with primary level education and below and double the number of married women than single women who disapproved of gifts. There appears to be a link between lower educational levels and marital status in the groups of participants who disapproved of gifts. This could indicate educated single women were the ones more likely to be given and to accept gifts from men.

Many Somali wives are alone without their husbands in Britain. This separation is generally involuntary and due to the civil war and the refugee situation. Many wives and children were sent into exile and they had to apply for family reunion for their husbands and fathers to join them. There are cases that take up to seven years for family reunion to be granted. Participants were asked how they felt women coped sexually in their husband's absence and options for the responses were provided in the question. This question was asked to assess if there were changes in the context of women approving of extra-marital affairs. It was also asked to see if there were any changes in what participants felt women did in the absence of their husbands. The responses were as follows: in the absence of their husbands: 86 per cent felt women stayed alone, 50 per cent felt women seek divorce, 82 per cent felt women went out with female friends, 66 per cent felt women did nothing, 18 per cent felt women had boyfriends. This lower response (18 per cent) suggests that having boyfriends outside of marriage was not the norm for Somali women. Other responses given were: 4 per cent felt women waited for husbands and 2 per cent felt women raised their children. I would argue that living in Britain has not resulted in a radical review of the perceptions of Somali women around sexuality. This finding is similar to Butler's (1999) argument that second-generation Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim women in Britain are maintaining their commitment to Islam but using religion to negotiate a more independent role for themselves. A Somali woman's sexuality is determined by her community's religious and cultural rules that few chose to flout openly.

According to Farida,

Girls are not allowed to have boyfriends, you will never see boys and girls living together in Somalia it is not known. When they come here they found freedom.

However, it is very rare especially for Somali women to be unfaithful. It is the woman who is 90% sure that she will not go back to her husband who has a boyfriend. (38)

Freedom as referred to by Farida for Somali women is the ability to meet men, have sex and have boyfriends. Women's sexual infidelity is rare but not uncommon in the Somali refugee community in London where many women were separated from their husbands due to the war. I have used a story told by a participant about infidelity as an illustration.

Case 5d

It is possible that a woman whose husband is abroad in Abu Dhabi will remain faithful to him for even up to three years, but I don't believe the man will remain faithful. It is possible that he has a girlfriend and he will come back to his wife. A woman I know who has 4 children, has got a boyfriend she told me. I was shocked, her boyfriend is a single Somali man. It is difficult for me to understand, as she is 15 years older than me and I can never do this. I don't think she plans to go back to her husband. She has been here for two years. The husband cannot come as he is unable to get a visa. Time goes on and every year you grow older. For example when your husband leaves you at 22, he will see you again at 25, and you will have changed, you will be a different person. This is what leads to divorce, the long periods of absence. They had a very good lifestyle in the Gulf and now they came here as refugees. The man cannot get a visa and when the wife came here she was simple and shy, now she has become westernised. She has adopted a new culture, everything is new. Even her clothes are new, I'm sure, she now wears trousers. I never saw her wearing trousers before as she came from Saudi Arabia. When the wife goes to the airport to greet the husband, he will be angry that she is wearing trousers, it won't occur to him that she is wearing them due to the cold weather. He will immediately tell her that they are finished and that she should come and collect her divorce papers.

The woman in the case 5d was shocked by her friend's admission of having a boyfriend and by her trousers equally and she says she could not do it. Trousers are regarded as attire for men. Somalis regarded this as a sign of western women's liberation and that a woman was trying to become like a man i.e. wanting to wear the trousers in the home. Therefore, most traditional Somali women in Britain only wear trousers under their long dresses because of the cold weather but younger women tend to wear trousers as part of their normal daily attire. An interesting point made in the case 5d above is how women who come to live in Britain are changing. They are becoming aware of their own 'personal growth' and

developing as 'individuals'. Some are adopting western lifestyles and these changes and their newly found autonomy jolt some husbands who come to join their wives. Some men who cannot deal with their wives' autonomy file for divorce and marry a more traditional woman. There are sexual double standards operating among men and women. There are men who are unfaithful to their wives, and who may decide to marry their lovers because Islam permits men to have more than one wife. Women who are unfaithful will be divorced by their husbands. Women's extra-marital sexual freedom is not permitted and men's is condoned. Simons (1995) cites how in Somalia the quickest way for Somali women to get divorced is to be caught with another man by her husband. Married women whose husbands are abroad are the group most likely to engage in extra-marital affairs.

The ease with which Somali women can divorce and re-marry reduced the need for extra-marital affairs. Women also fear gossip and social ostracism as stated above. This finding was similar to that of El-Solh's (1993) study which found a few cases of sexual deviance (e.g. Somali women co-habiting with white Christian men) but generally such behaviour was condemned as morally repugnant by the most liberal and traditional Somali women (El Solh, 1993). Women's autonomy is not a desirable pursuit in the Somali community. Conformity to the required mores is the norm. Most Somali women resisted such changes to avoid being labelled a weak person who is easily influenced and who has no personal beliefs. This is considered a reflection on the woman's family background and upbringing. Stories of this sort will be circulated to the woman's relatives at home and abroad. The standing of the woman's family in the society would suffer.

One participant, Khadija had strong feelings about the sexual double standards that operate for men and women.

For example, I have noticed that the girls have changed, they go to nightclubs. But the problem is that each time that they go out to a nightclub, and they are drinking or with foreigners, they are afraid of being seen by Somalis who may come there. As they know that they will be insulted. Many Somali women will not accept to be insulted in public when they are with foreigners, being told off about who you are going out with and where you are going. It is enough for them to see you in the disco. You could be drinking a coke and they will say it has whisky in it, and that this girl drinks alcohol. There are also changes with the men. In Somalia, if a man is not your brother he has no right to insult you. But here the men have taken liberties to say what they like to girls they meet. I can't stand this. What I find sad is that the girls pay attention to this. They are afraid of these people. They want to

live their lives but they are afraid of being insulted every time. (11)

Somali men insult unknown Somali women in public when they see them with white and non-Somali men. Gossip is a form of social control that makes some women adhere to cultural norms of behaviour so they will not be ostracised by their community and family. While there is more female autonomy, many women are bound by culture and infibulation from having sex freely. This finding is similar to Bradby's (1999) study of Punjabi women and marriage in Scotland. The South Asian women used strategies to contravene the constraints placed on them by their community in order to avoid the damaging effect of gossip on their family's honour. These strategies included not socialising in areas of cities where her family and friends would be present.

The next section considers the division of household labour and resources and family decision-making.

5.4 Division of labour and resources - household decision making

In this section I will explore changes in women's role in the household and their attitudes towards the division of labour and resources and household decision making. The Somali family in exile is undergoing many changes both structurally and internally. Women are acquiring more autonomy and self-confidence, and they have higher expectations of their own role in the family e.g. an increased say in decision-making. Women learn new skills as they have to deal with family problems and enter into the public arena to work e.g. to deal with immigration matters and to study. Most men are less adaptable and they often seek to exert their control over their families because of their own loss of status in the public sector due to unemployment and racism. Men can take out their frustration and anger on their families and this can result in physical and sexual violence against women (Mama, 1989).

Mama's (1989) study of domestic violence against Black women in the home found that women who had some economic autonomy or who held the tenancy in their homes were still subjected to domestic violence and were known to be unwilling to involve the police. So having some material autonomy did not translate into more power or equality in the women's relationships. However, middle-class and professional women were more likely to

hide the violence against them because they were ashamed and they were used to respect as individuals in their professional lives. Domestic violence occurred in Somalia and men beat their wives in Britain too. It is hard to say if it is more frequent. Participants acknowledged it was common in many marriages in Britain. One participant who had not been beaten in Somalia stated her husband had slapped her in Britain. She blamed it on his frustration due to unemployment and racism. So at least the explanation has changed.

In Somali families, like many other refugee families, men are used to being the head of the household and to making decisions in their countries of origin. However, in Britain, many women and children are learning to participate in family decision-making. This can lead to conflict when men feel their power is being challenged. Traditionally mothers are responsible for their children's moral, religious and cultural upbringing. When the children do not achieve high academic standards or they misbehave, the father will hold the mother responsible. Children over 18 often move out of the family home due to conflicts with parents over curfews, dress, relationships, dating and other cultural issues. This will be reflected on the woman who bears the responsibility for the children's behaviour.

Deem (1978) found that there are British men who know how to cook, wash, clean and care for children and who never offer to do any of these things. Most Somali men however do not know how to perform these domestic tasks because they never learnt how to do them when they were young. Domestic work is seen as women's work. In the Somali refugee community the majority of the men are unemployed, but this does not mean they will help with housework for cultural reasons. However, the support that the women used to receive with housework in Somalia through the extended family is not present here in Britain, and so these issues affect a woman's autonomy and constitute a strong area of contention. In my study only 48 per cent of participants reported that male members of their household do some housework, whereas 88 per cent of participants agreed that men should share domestic work. The household task most commonly performed by men was shopping and the least performed were cooking, dish washing, cleaning and childcare.

Hibo who has two sons and two daughters, talks about how her sons were socialised into not doing housework.

In our country the boys never used to do any housework. They never washed plates

or cooked any meals. They were brought their food in the sitting room...I do not like them to behave like they were still in Somalia, as men here do their own work. The women work hard here, I want the men to help the women. If they don't help in the house, they are the losers, because tomorrow if they are on their own and they don't know how to cook or do all the things I am doing for them, then they will die of hunger. As people are equal, I want them to learn every thing. It is not that the girls do all the housework, they have to help (44).

Many single men cannot cope with living alone so they buy 'take away' food and they can become malnourished because of chewing khat and not eating properly. There are situations where there are adolescent boys in the home who are not helping out and this puts the burden of housework on to the women and girls in the home. This extra work often results in girls not having time to do homework and women becoming too tired to study or attend classes.

The role of housework within the Somali community has been devalued. The women have seen that there are other life options such as a career, education and employment. The men feel that the women have become arrogant and are not fulfilling their wifely duties. The women on the other hand feel that the men are not bringing in any income or fulfilling their role of the provider. Muna believes these conflicts over housework end in marital tensions and relationship breakdowns resulting in women ejecting men from the home.

The women are becoming more assertive and stronger because of the loneliness. Most of them have small children. They are pushing the pushchairs and going shopping. Some of the women you see are carrying the baby, pushing the pushchair and doing the shopping, with these two small babies...About 90 per cent of the women see that the men are treating them so badly. There are 10 per cent who are going to pretend they are powerful, and they wanted to show off and kick their men out. (48)

Many women who end abusive relationships, are regarded by other women as show-offs because they are taking advantage of being able to eject their husbands from the marital home, although there is some acknowledgement that these women might have suffered domestic violence. This situation is applicable more to men who are unemployed. I do not have data on earnings but the vast majority of Somali men in Britain are unemployed and receiving social security benefits. Some professional men with higher education levels work as unpaid volunteers in community centres. A few have low paid part-time community worker posts. Very few professional men agree to do manual, unskilled work

and they are unable to obtain white-collar jobs that will pay enough to provide for rent and food for a large family. The unemployed men tend not to help with household work and childcare, which makes the women very frustrated. This situation is slowly changing as more men are forced to help in the home when their wives are sick or having babies. Older children take a lot of responsibility for childcare and household work. Women who had access to their own social security payments directly had more control over household resources and what they spent it on. However, this was often spent on the home itself. This finding contrasts with the findings of Cohen's (1991) study of Asian Mirpuri Muslims. In Cohen's study, a majority of the women were not involved with money management concerning outside transactions like bills and social security payments. The contrast with my study is that the majority of Somali women whatever their education levels were responsible for bills, rent, shopping and other payments. The control of money management increases women's share of household power.

Farrah describes the range of household work women undertake and the difficulties in bringing up children alone in Britain. Farrah has applied for family reunion for her husband to join her.

There are Somali women who it is said when they come here they encounter mental health problems due to isolation and living alone. This is because they were used to living with their families, mother, father, brothers, sisters and relatives. Here you have to take a child to school and pick him up. When the child is playing outside here you have to be watching him all the time, you have to take them around wherever they need to go. Back home you will dress your child, give him his food and the child will go to school and return home by himself safely. There is nothing to worry about. But, here you are afraid of everything. You hear of children being abducted, lost, being killed and the body found beside a river. Being sexually abused and having the neck broken. Somali women will hear things like this and they will stick close to their children. They will follow them to school and they will be near them when they go outside. (15)

The women's domestic work is increased by the need to watch the children constantly. There is often no one to delegate the work to.

Case 5e

Hafisa, a participant, lived with her brother, two-brothers-in-law, her husband and three young children under five. She did not get any help with domestic work and the house had three floors. She complained during the interview of the burden of having to run the house single-handedly. The men in the household did very little domestic work and she had to cook and clean for all the household members and look after the children. She had not received any formal education and she wanted to study, to learn to drive and to visit her friends when she wanted to but she had no one to baby sit for her so this was not possible. Her husband had a car and he would do the shopping for her, which meant that she did not have to leave the house.

Most participants did not own or have access to a car and it was a difficult for them to go shopping with the children. Many women like Hafisa are left with the burden of the household chores and the inability to exercise their autonomy. I did not ask participants if they had access to a car. However, from my knowledge only one participant had access to her own car that her employed husband bought for her. A few other families had cars but the women could not drive. Since the interviews I am aware that six other participants have purchased cars or have access to cars because they learnt to drive. Almost all the participants had fridges, washing machines, video recorders and televisions with the exception being young women who shared unfurnished flats that did not have washing machines.

Somali women were used to buying fresh food daily from the market in Somalia because refrigerators and freezers are not used in most households in Somalia. In Britain, the participants had to adjust to doing their shopping once or twice a week, and carrying the shopping home was very difficult when accompanied by small children. According to Filsan the main changes in the household in terms of gender relations was the woman's request that the men in the household do some domestic chores.

That is why now most of the men, find it difficult to get families, because this is a different culture. But the women, if you see the women, they are now realising that they have got a right to be equal like that at the house. I mean when they are married, they are equal because the responsibility of the house will not lie on one person. You have to share everything. Even sometimes I have seen many men taking children to the school even though it is still rare, but they are coming to adjust themselves to the system. (9)

Some women are refusing to get married and if they do they are negotiating ground rules on

the division of labour. While there are still many men who resist sharing household power. The tide is turning in women's favour. Women's attitudes to household decision making have changed and many are now requesting men to undertake household chores. Some women are aware of the inequality in household power between men and women, but they are powerless to change things because of their own lack of autonomy in the household.

5.5 Conclusion

Women had more autonomy in Britain but social and cultural pressures on them to conform affected their control over marriage, divorce, sexuality and division of labour and resources and household decision-making. Parents have less direct control over choice of marriage partners for their daughters. However, because of indirect pressure there are women with further/higher education levels who agree to arranged marriages because of the pressures and fears about biological clocks and of being left on-the-shelf. Some young women have been defibulated (reversing their infibulation) to gain control over their own sexuality ostensibly for medical reasons but it is seen as an act of defiance.

Generally, women conformed to the required mores to avoid social ostracism and a bad reputation. Somali men were insulting unknown Somali women in public when they saw them mixing with non-Somali men by using shame and humiliation to reinforce Somali cultural and social behaviour requirements. Participants generally expressed conservative views on women's sexual freedom and the need for women to adhere to traditionally accepted roles. The next chapter examines religion and how it affects women's autonomy.

Chapter 6

RELIGION & RELIGIOUS LAW

This chapter will focus on the influence of religion on the changes and continuities Somali women experience in Britain. It will also explore how religion affects Somali women's lives in the areas of Islam, marriage, divorce, sexuality, freedom of movement and the division of labour and resources and obedience to husbands and fathers. These are all the areas that affect Somali women's lives mainly in the private domain of the household but also outside the home.

Muslims regard Islam both as a religion and a way of life. It is seen as a universal and unifying religion with a clear political and ideological framework. Islamic practices are seen as based on the principles and commandments established in the Koran, which like many religious documents is long, poetic and open to interpretation. Culture, religion and language are important parts of Somali identity in the diaspora. Somali women regard Islam as being part of their culture. Islam shows Muslims how to dress and how to behave with members of the opposite sex and with non-Muslims. Islam also shows Muslims how to pray and how to fast, what food to eat, and how to marry and how to divorce (Tames, 1982).

6.1 Islam

Some opponents of Islam have endorsed the 'western' view of all Muslim women as silent, subjugated and suffering, with research highlighting these aspects. However, other researchers have found signs of progress and changes even in reclusive lives (Altorki, 1986; Fakhro, 1990). In the academic, as well as popular UK discourse there are two schools of thought which regard Islamic ideology as either the cause of subjugation or liberation (Afshar, 1993). The pro-Islamic debate has the following features: the rights and independent status accorded women in the Koran, and that having a separate and independent legal, religious and economic identity are emphasised, as also their inheritance rights and a negotiated marriage contract. Islam does not single out women as the cause of all evil, unlike for example, Eve in Christianity. The supporters of Islam argue that the veil is liberating and

empowering. It protects the woman from becoming a sex object and it bestows respect, dignity and honour on women. The use of the concept of *hijab* in terms of separation of physical space is viewed as empowering. Women in all-female schools and environments have greater success. The fundamentalists argue that women have been empowered by Islam. Women have a powerful domestic role and they insist all Muslim women should be educated and active (Afshar, 1993). Equality between the sexes is seen as western and an unrealisable goal.

A critique of Islam highlights the discrepancies between Koranic text and the practices of Muslim men. For example, men are regarded as heads of household and as guardians of their wives, but women are the repositories of the family honour. Men have the legal rights to protect this honour in most Islamic countries. As a consequence many Muslim wives require their husband's permission to travel, to take up paid employment, and to leave the house. Muslim men also claim the right to polygamy. Married women are enjoined by the Koran to obey their husbands. For cases of adultery one male witness is equated with two women: 'Call in two male witnesses from among you, but if two cannot be found, then one man and two women who you judge fit to act as witnesses' (Koran, 2:82). Men get twice as much inheritance as women. Islam is seen as an oppressive ideology to women because the *hijab* (veil) is regarded as a symbol of oppression because only women are required to wear it (Afshar, 1993).

The majority of participants in this study regard their religion as a positive influence in their lives, though many are aware of the discrepancies and inequalities in the way Islam is practised in their community. It is however, all they have and in what they regard as a hostile and racist society. Sahgal and Yuval-Davis (1992) describe how fundamentalism and cultural and religious values generally have been used to challenge the rights of women to organise themselves autonomously. However, many Somali women have begun to organise themselves into self-help groups within their communities in London to request health, counselling and educational support. They also have solidarity and friendship groups, where they provide support on a personal level. They often form financial savings groups (*hagbad*). This is partly because they are conscious of their identity as Muslims in Britain, as members of a minority religion. Their religion provides an anchor and a grip on reality for them in a

world where uncertainty and confusion reign. Sahgal and Yuval-Davis (1992:5) refer to the importance of religion in the following quotation. 'A general sense of despair and disorientation has opened people to religion as a source of solace.'

Gender relations in some Muslim societies, are influenced by Islam, and a particular form of male dominance referred to as classic patriarchy (see chapter 2 section 2.5.1). Kandiyoti (1996) has theorised this as marked by a patriarchal bargain between women and men. Conservative Islamic discourse associated moral decay with foreign values and western corruption. Women were seen as a key element in restoring traditional Muslim values. This anti-imperialist and populist discourse constructed women as radical militants rather than traditionalists in the restoration of Muslim authenticity. Islam played a role of homogenisation of ideology and practice as concerns the family, gender relations and women in the wake of diverse practices in various Muslim societies. This meant that many Somalis who were not conservative in their home country regarding devotion to Islamic practices, adopted strict Islamic practices in exile in Britain. This was to prevent the dilution of their religion and culture by the dominant group's culture. The political role of Islam was created by the breakdown of patriarchal bargains and the confusion produced by the forces of social transformations. Many Somali women in Britain do make patriarchal bargains, (e.g. wearing headscarves, obedience to husbands) in order to retain their husband's and the Somali community's respect and in order not to be categorised as a westernised Somali woman.

At one end of the spectrum of Somali women in London, Heema abhors the excesses of Islamic fundamentalism, but she would like to see change effected by working from within Somali culture. She believes the anti-Islamic sentiments across the world make it difficult to seek redress, because of the political dimensions that have crept in to cultural issues.¹ Heema sees Somalia as an Islamic African country as distinct from an Islamic Arab country.

¹ Any woman seeking redress or change in the way things are done in the Somali community could be accused of being westernised.

I also object in a way to the way women are treated in Somalia and in Islamic countries in general. But I would like that to be corrected or addressed within the framework of our culture, as an African Islamic country, which has African aspects and Islamic aspects. Much as I object to radical fundamentalism, as a way of life that is not practised in the Somali African culture, I am also extremely proud and I relate very deeply to our understanding or our practices of Islam which has been in our country for a very long time. And within that context I am interested in how women are treated in Somalia in the Somali culture both in its African Somali context and in Islam as is practised in Somalia. Of course, I find it very difficult to address that now because of the general anti-Islamic feeling across the globe. It is very easy to become anti-Islamic in a political cultural way, without addressing the real shortcomings and I am interested in that area. Also, things like female circumcision, divorce laws and all aspects of women and their rights.(37)

The correlation between more liberal religious beliefs and education levels varied. There were women with higher education levels who had liberal beliefs like Heema's and there were others who were more conservative and traditional in their approach to religion. Farrah has a fairly conservative view of women and men's equality based on her religious interpretation of gender equality.

God in his wisdom and understanding did not make women and men equal. When talking about witnesses, one man is taken as one witness, and two women are taken as one witness. God made women weaker than men, this is how we know that men and women are not equal. Even, take Adam and Eve, or in Somalia, the President said that men and women are equal but that was just an announcement. The truth is that they are not equal and they never will be. (15)

6.2 Marriage

In this section I will outline the Somali Islamic approach to marriage and women's rights in marriage. I will also consider participants' responses to continuities and changes in marriage and pre-marital relations.

Muslim women migrants and refugees in western countries have seen changes take place in their families as a result of migration. Some Muslim writers argue that throughout Islam women have the same status and rights as men, 'You are members, one of another' (Koran 3:195). However, they maintain there is a difference in the division of labour between them which is not based on sexual equality but on a biological division. This has led men to work outside the home and women to work inside the home. They state Islam defines different spheres of work for men and women to complement their separate roles in society. It is

modern Western thinkers that concluded Islam, in giving women a separate role has given her an inferior position. This division of labour is reinforced by Islamic legislation for the needs of both sexes (Khan, 1995). The Islamic marriage contract lists the responsibilities of both men and women and it sets out a woman's right to divorce, inheritance and maintenance from her husband. A Muslim woman is expected to be obedient to her husband who is the head of the household (Khatab, 1993).

In Modood's (1992) analysis of the British Asian Muslim community, he describes a process of continuity of customs and culture. He refers to the closeness of the attitudes of the second generation of British born South Asian young people to those of their parents or peers in the Subcontinent, rather than to their British peers. He acknowledges that there are some changes but he maintains that there is a sense of belonging to an extended family. Once young Pakistanis get married, they mature and start to take part in decision making and they acquire financial understanding.

I found that among the participants there are also continuities of culture and customs within the Somali Muslim community with regards to marriage. This is because it will have an effect on many Somali women's ability to play an active role in their own marriages. The Islamic marriage is a contractual agreement that provides security for a woman's role as wife and mother. The Koran also states that Muslim women are not allowed to marry non-Muslims, whereas Muslim men are allowed to marry Jewish and Christian women (women of the book). This is because women tend to convert to their husband's religion. Women had the role of passing on traditions and cultural values to their children. Many Muslim women saw positive aspects in their Koranic rights to keep their name after marriage, protection of their property and inheritance rights. Men have to pay the *meher* before the consummation of the marriage. This is regarded as an exchange for the man's right to have sexual intercourse. The practical aspects about the payment of the *meher*, the transmission of values to the children and the changes that women have to cope with in marriage are not always possible to fulfil in practice in Britain. For example, many women do not have sufficient grounding in religious education. They also face numerous social and health problems in Britain that distract them from this path.

Muslims are exhorted to marry unless there are valid physical or economic reasons:

It is necessary for you to marry, because marriage is the most powerful shield against the allurements of sight and the protection of your private parts; if one of you cannot afford it, let him fast because fasting weakens the sexual impulse. (Bukhari, quoted in Mazheruddin Siddiqi, 1982:32)

Marriage, therefore guards against promiscuity. The purpose of the *meher* is to safeguard the financial position of the woman after marriage to enable her to defend her rights. The Koran states:

And give women their dowries as a free gift, but if they themselves be pleased to give it up to you a portion of it, then eat it with enjoyment and with wholesome result (iv.4).

And if you wish to have (one) wife in the place of another and you have given one of them a heap of gold (as dowry) take not anything from her; would you take it by slandering (her) and (doing her) manifest wrong? (iv.20).

The inheritance rights in Islam are as follows: daughters get half of the share of property allocated to the son or half of her father's property if there are no sons; if there is more than one daughter they will divide equally two-thirds of the property. A widow is entitled to an eighth of her husband's property, but if there are no children then she receives one-sixth. (Mazheruddin Siddiqi, 1982).

There are certain guidelines for marriage in Islam and how to find a partner. There is no dating or personal intimacy before marriage and the woman's consent must be obtained. Two witnesses are required to make a marriage valid as well as the consent of both partners. Women's rights in marriage include food, shelter, clothing and the woman is entitled to fair treatment by her husband. A woman's obligations in marriage include not to refuse her husband sexual intercourse, and she has the same right; to obey her husband except when he goes against Islam; to be discrete and not to discuss the family business outside; and fidelity is required from both the husband and wife (Khattab,1993). A husband is under legal obligation to provide for his wife but the wife does not have this duty.

When Somali women come to Europe, there are problems regarding their freedom to choose their marriage partner. Some women have complained about the 'big brother' approach Somali men have towards women in Europe when they see them with white or foreign men in public. These people could be colleagues or friends but the Somali man would approach

the foreigner to warn him off and he would insult the woman. This patriarchal and 'protective' behaviour has been transferred to the diaspora. It is because women are seen as the guardians of morality in the Somali community.

Khadija, describes her experience when she used to spend time with a white male friend of hers.

I would take a short cut to work and spend some time at his home and hang out. There was a big problem. One day we were out at the station, and a man from my tribe saw us and told him to leave me alone. He thought we were going out but we were only friends. I was so angry and so was my younger brother. Since that time we were not as friendly as before. I was angry, I went to find this (Somali) man but I was told he had left the area. I knew that some people were whispering about and insulting me behind my back. They went to see my younger brother and they told him to talk to me as I was sleeping around and drinking etc. He told them that I live my life as I want to and that my parents are in agreement with this. He told them to leave me alone, or to come and tell me to my face. So some Somalis even came to advise me. I asked them whether they were the ones who paid for me to come to Europe. They said no, so I asked them to leave me alone. I have a father and brothers. If there is a problem it is for them to sort out not you, and they have confidence in me. They know what I do and what I don't do. The Somali men are always there, insulting the women. I live an independent and free life. They don't like this. They want the women to wear scarves and to marry the first man who asks them. Some Somalis come to see me and they ask why I have not got married. I tell them just to pull their legs that I do not want to marry. Then they say that they are sure I will marry a white man and a Christian. (11)²

Among the participants Khadija's views are exceptional. She believes herself to be assertive and emancipated and most other participants did not display her honesty and openness in their behaviour. They were afraid of news and gossip that could spoil their reputation getting back to their families both in Britain and Somalia. Somali women are tightly policed in public and they were expected to behave and dress modestly. Muslim women interviewed by Butler (1999) stated that the social control exercised by Muslim men over Muslim women was more a product of the 'men-made culture' than Islam. There are also 'honour' killings that take place in some Muslim societies in Arabia. Women have been murdered by their families because of alleged pre- or extra-marital sexual relationships (El Saadawi, 1980).

The sexual violence is not marked in the Somali community but Somali women who mix

² I have been informed that Khadija is now married to a white man and they have children.

with white men do face ostracism and gossip but I have not heard of such extremes of behaviour as murder. However, rape has been used as a weapon of war between all factions during the Somali civil war and the aftermath (see chapter 4, 4.7). The complete breakdown in government and the ensuing anarchy has meant combatants of various militia factions have raped Somali women with impunity. Rape has been described as routine for raiders who loot, intimidate and kill rural populations in Southern Somalia (Human Rights Watch, 1995).

Leyla prefers her children to choose their own marriage partners.

When they are ready they should choose their own marriage partners. A girl should get married to someone Muslim. If I choose her partner, she may not be happy with my choice ...It is bad to bring couples together. It is better to leave them alone, to meet by themselves.(5)

The move to Britain saw the continuity of some customs and the emergence of new ways of doing things. In some families a woman would have a husband chosen for her in the traditional way, but she had to give her consent to the union. In Britain, there is the emergence of some women choosing their husbands and others having boyfriends albeit secretly (see chapter 5). The religion can be a barrier to choice of a spouse. One mother while acknowledging that her children are free to choose whom to marry, is keen that they chose Muslims (even non-Somali's).

I pray to god that since our country is destroyed and we are in a foreign country that they don't marry someone who is a non-Muslim.(31)

Marriage to a Muslim is an opportunity to ensure any children born within that marriage continue the religion and culture.

Within the Muslim marriage the husband was the head of the household. However, some Somali women in Britain have decided that they have the right to be treated with equality by their husbands. This is definitely an area where the consciousness of some participants has been 'raised' regarding marriage as a partnership. Nura talks about her emerging awareness of gender roles in marriage and women's marriage options in the UK.

I see marriage in this country as a partnership, not that the woman is lower than the man, and not that the only thing that she has to do in this life is working at home and staying at home. (40)

Whether Nura actually will act on her new belief when she gets married is another matter. Madina describes how early and arranged marriages were beginning to be challenged, by women's increasing urbanisation, by access to education and by developing support systems outside the family.

It is early marriage - even in Somalia this was becoming a practice that was being challenged. Because girls' education and being urbanised having and developing friends and other supportive sources apart from the family had emerged, you know.(37)

Men appear to have more power than women when it comes to choosing a marriage partner because the religion has allowed them to marry up to four wives. This is on condition all wives are treated equally (Koran, Sura 4:3). Hibo outlines this situation.

There are even men who remarry with their wives sitting at home. Somali men have said, God has given men permission to marry four wives. But God did not say to go ahead and marry four. In the Koran it says that you must treat all the women equally. For example, if you give one wife a dress you must give the other wife one too. The same with the children if you buy a cup for one you have to give the others. If you sleep in one house tonight then you will sleep in another one the next night. In Somalia, the men marry up to two or three wives but they are all treated equally.

The men must be able to afford to maintain two or more families according to the religion. So that one is not worse off than the other is. They should be the same. But it is very difficult for a human being to treat two people equally. It has to be a person who fears God who can marry two wives. If it is a person who cannot be fair then it is a crime against the religion.

I am a woman and I would not like my husband to marry another woman. But it is up to the man if he wants to remarry. If it happens, it is the man alone who can reconcile all his wives and make his children see themselves as siblings. What is happening is the man is saying he is permitted four wives and he remarries. The first wife will say so you have remarried then get out of the marital home. Then the children will become like orphans as the parents cannot live together. The children need their father, the parents are fighting and this is happening here a lot.(44)

Men have the prerogative regarding how many wives they want to marry. The issues that Hibo has raised are pertinent to women's choice of marriage partner. Hibo has said how some men indulge in polygamy because they feel it is their God given right. They do not think of the practical and economic considerations which having more than one wife can bring. Some of the women who become second and third wives do not have any choice in the matter. In theory they can refuse but if their fathers present them with a potential husband, in practice very few are able to refuse. This could be due to filial, religious and

cultural duties, obedience, poverty, and lack of education and inability to lead an independent life. There were no participants who revealed they were in a polygamous marriage. However, I was informed about some Somali women asylum seekers in the UK whose husbands had married second wives back in Somalia. The wives in Britain often requested a divorce upon hearing the news, some travelled back to Somalia to seek the truth and some just accepted their husband's marriage as fait accompli. The men appeared to be using the religion to suit their own purposes by marrying more than one wife because all the wives and children may not be treated equally. Divorce used to be easier for men because they had more grounds on which to divorce women but now there have been some changes in the way divorce is conducted (see chapter 5, 5.2). The next section considers how the religion has affected women's attitudes to divorce.

6.3 Divorce

Marriage in Islam is regarded as a contract for life that can be dissolved through divorce only as a last resort. It is not a 'sacrament', as in some Christian religions where marriage has a sacred significance. Religious and cultural changes in gender roles due to migration mean that family breakdown is more prevalent in the Somali community in Britain than in Africa.

Samiya describes the problems brought about by the religious and cultural changes.

Religious and cultural problems happen simultaneously. The effect of this causes children to run away from their families. The family creates problems between the woman and the husband, due to cultural differences. Then at the end they divorce. So many women single parents live in temporary accommodation. They are often rehoused very far from their families. They don't know how to contact their families, their friends. They don't know how to go to the mosque and to their communities. They are isolated and depressed and it affects their ability to observe their culture and religion. (39)

Lone mothers who live far from their communities are isolated and prone to depression. They are unable to practise their religion because there are no mosques or family support in their area. In practice, most Somali women did not receive much religious instruction when they were young and in the absence of a mosque and religious community nearby, religious observance lapses.

Most men want to keep their status quo as head of the household by all means. When women

want to negotiate a change in the prescribed religious and cultural norms of behaviour, the men feel threatened. Some may react by leaving, because their families urge them to divorce their uppity wives.

Many families suffer from domestic violence that can lead to divorce. The following case looks at changes in the resolution of domestic violence and how women are using their autonomy because Islam permits divorce.

Case 6a

In Europe Amina sees that things were different. She saw that here men and women work together. So she changed her opinion on things. In Somalia, if couples argue and the man beats the woman, she will not be able to leave the house. If she does, she will return home to her parents. After a couple of weeks she will return home (marital home) after the man has given some gifts. He is free to marry another wife or whatever he wants he can do. Now they are in Europe and if he misbehaves she will dial 999, he cannot beat her.

The hot headed men with 10 children, who used to beat their wives, kicking and beating them, now that they are in London and they still fight. The only way out is to divorce. She will then tell him to shut up, what does he think this is? Hargeisa? He cannot beat her any more. He will become frustrated and reduced to biting newspapers as he cannot beat her any more.(38)

Some women are aware of and are making use of their legal rights. They are challenging their husbands when they try to beat them up, and they are also requesting divorces. In reality the numbers of women requesting a divorce are reduced, because of the stigma caused by community opinion viewing such women as going against their religion and culture (women are not supposed to challenge a man's authority). However, Islam allows divorce although the Islamic divorce laws make it harder for most Muslim women to initiate divorce. I believe the issue of 'calling the police' to the home is done without any thought of the consequences. The family can be exposed to the scrutiny of social services and immigration when the police are called (see chapter 7). But some Somali women believe that this is an effective deterrent to stop domestic violence and abuse by serving as a threat to the husband who beats his wife, not realising long term consequences. Frequently the threat to call the police is mentioned by the wife to signal that the man should leave the family home.

Traditionalists deplore the 'power' women have in Britain and the shift in the balance of power in the household towards women, which they feel is against the religion. They regard

it as a contributory factor to the increase in divorce rates. An urban myth exists in the Somali community about women's increased power base in Britain and their ability to call the police to reinforce their marital rights. The following case outlines the breakdown of a marriage in London that led to divorce, and the important role of religion.

Case 6b

Zahra is a housewife with three children aged 4, 6 and 8. She used to be a bank clerk in Somalia. She lives with her graduate husband Musa in a housing association maisonette in London. Her husband is employed as a part-time community worker. Zahra is very religious and she prays regularly. Her younger sister lives with her and the accommodation is tight. Musa chews *khat* and he drinks alcohol. Zahra is unhappy with her husband's behaviour and she has tried to talk to him about it. They have a car that Zahra uses to do the shopping and to take the children to and from school. She is an independent person and she does not ask her husband to do any work at home. She has however made requests for him to cut down the drinking and chewing of *khat*. Musa often gets drunk and high on *khat*. He claims to be depressed and fed up of living in a racist country. Zahra usually avoids him on such occasions but frequently he has become more belligerent and they end up arguing. Musa spent several nights away from the home on more than one occasion. When Zahra asked him about his absences he was rude and abusive. Zahra did not want her marriage to break up but she did not know what to do when Musa frequently came home blind drunk in an alcoholic stupor.

Eventually she decided to ask a clansman who was also a sheikh and good friend of Musa's to talk to him about his behaviour. This made Musa furious and he beat Zahra up and he left the home. He returned a few days later and apologised to Zahra blaming the drink and his depression. He had lost his job and the family was deeply in debt. He stayed in bed for days on end and when Zahra talked to him about looking for a job he was rude and abusive. He beat Zahra with a belt and he accused her of trying to become the 'man in the house'. Zahra called the police who came round and she asked them to get him out of the house because of his violence. The tenancy is in Zahra's name. The police asked him to leave and Zahra was relieved to be free of the violence but sad at the end of her marriage. She had tried her best to obey her husband as her religion demanded but she had failed and she had called the police as a last resort. Zahra later requested a divorce and the dissolution of her Islamic marriage. The divorce was finalised after three months according to Islamic law.

Some women are using religious teachings to guide the relationship between husband and wife. They believe there should be mutual respect in a relationship. The theme of self-sacrifice while remaining faithful to religious beliefs runs through this extract. There were views from educated participants who believed uneducated women were the one's divorcing their husbands.

Muna feels there is a limit to how much abuse a woman can take, even for the children's sake. There is a conflict between the stigma of a divorce, and being a family without a father, and the anger of living without self-respect. Muna talks about this issue of women's threshold of tolerance and the role of Islam.

Women in Somalia had a lot of support from relatives. Here the women are depressed and suffer mental health breakdowns. This is because they are pregnant, carrying heavy shopping, pushing the pushchair, taking children to and from school. All this while the man is enjoying himself. The children will suffer when the mother is ill and Social Services will become involved. Men ate khat in Somalia, but not in this way.

I said the father is the king and I am the queen. I have got some rules in the home and he has got his rules. We have to share everything and he must see me as a human being. And treat me as the mother and queen of the house and I will respect him. But if he didn't respect me how can I respect him. That's it! In the Koran, God said the more patience you have, the more you are blessed. But sometimes your husband will beat and kick you and it is hard. You have to try to respect him and be patient for the children's sake and not for his sake. (48)

The isolation women experience in Britain and the inhumane treatment some women face from their husbands increases their sense of injustice. Some women try to rationalise their behaviour by referring to religious sources. In reality I believe many women do suffer in silence because of their religious beliefs. Women's sexual freedom is also an issue that conflicts with Islamic beliefs.

6.4 Sexuality

This section looks at how religion affects a woman's ability to control her sexuality and women's views on the religion and female circumcision. In the new country of settlement, women may turn to religion to reaffirm their identity. The sense of alienation experienced by migration and not being familiar with the language, culture and institutions in Britain has left many migrants bewildered and bereft of a familiar anchor. As mentioned above religion provides familiar and useful knowledge for security and a sense of self.

Young Muslim women in western countries have to contend with cultural clashes. These clashes are between the religious and traditional values of their parents and the values of

western societies. The link between religion and identity is seen in the rise in the numbers of young Muslim women who wear the headscarf (*hijab*) out of choice, to openly demonstrate that they are Muslims. This practice intensified in the wake of anti-Islamic feelings during the Rushdie affair in Britain in the late 1980s (see chapter 2, 2.3.2).

Women are often referred to as being the guardians of the religion, values and traditions of the family and the clan (Guyot, 1978). This study considers the participants' own views on religion and sexuality. In Somali culture there is concern about girls having relationships with boys. Somalis fear that the girls are at risk of pre-marital sex and pregnancy if they attend mixed schools, parties or if they socialise with boys. Girls' behaviour is regulated and monitored more than boys', because a family's reputation is linked to the behaviour of its women. Most of my participants and writings by Somali women in Britain support this.

In our religion and culture we don't like the boys and girls to sleep with each other until after marriage but we don't mind for them to be friends...

We worry that the girls will just fall in love and won't think carefully about their future. We want what is best for them - to show them the way, and we worry that they have lost respect for us. (Somali Women's Association, 1987:53)

But some of the young people do not respect their parents and they do not listen to them regarding their religious obligations. Nuur described how the community is dithering between two cultures and the religion is being abandoned.

The young people especially if they come very young in this country, they act just as if they are British or as if they are not Somalis any more. So they take in the whole culture all together and leave their culture behind you see. Especially we are Muslim and we have to practice our religion. And they are not practising our religion at all.(13)

Religion, culture and the control of female sexuality are all closely interlinked. Islam has permeated most Somali customs and traditions that concern marriage and relationships between the sexes. This can be seen in continuance of the belief of female circumcision (infibulation and excision) as a religious requirement, and in some religious practices like wearing Islamic dress to keep a woman's modesty intact, which is reinforced in Britain to strengthen identity and self-confidence.

Nuur tries to separate out issues of religion and circumcision.

No, I think it is wrong, I think it is not all right at all. I mean we suffer a lot and we know the pain, we know what happens and we shouldn't practice it on our children as well. As I say it is nothing to do with the religion, and it is nothing to do with the culture. It is a bad habit, and we should stop that bad habit, and it is time to stop and we should stop it, and I don't think it is right. Health wise it is quite problematic and it can give you problems. Culturally it is not right, and in the religion it is quite wrong. It is immoral and we shouldn't practise it on our (unborn) children, and we should stop it. That is my opinion on the circumcision (13).

But such views on circumcision were not common. While many women acknowledged the pain of circumcision they felt the end justified the means. The honour of the family should be put above a woman's pain. The following examples represent a range of participants' views on Female Genital Cutting (FGC).

Fardosa believes that female circumcision is not a religious requirement, and she feels strongly about carrying out her religious duties. She would have circumcised her daughters if it was required.

It is not obligatory in the religion. If it was I would have done it. When the girl is big, she has been sown up and cut. When she is to be married, she will be cut and open again. Childbirth and menstruation are difficult. It is forbidden in the religion to touch a girl. I feel it is wrong and I will not circumcise my daughters. (35)

Nura believes circumcision is a religious requirement but that the clitoridectomy method (sunna) is the preferred method and not the infibulation method.

Yes, I think it is good. But not the way they used to do it back home, just sunna. Just a little touch. Because it is better, and in health terms, the person's future is more comfortable. To circumcise is in the religion. But the way they used to circumcise back home wasn't the right way. It was like imprisoning the person, but the real thing only little bit, sunna. And the person maybe walks the next day. And it is not as complicated. And not harmful taking all the nervous systems...(40)

According to Nura, her behaviour in trying to control her daughter's sexuality will be governed by what she believes her religion advises, which is clitoridectomy.

Madina's awareness of the problems FGC causes women has led her to change her opinion. She also now regards it as a custom.

No, it is no longer done. It is a bad custom. The girls have many difficulties with it. They experience pain when it is being done, when having a baby and when getting

married. The infibulation stitches are very painful.(1)

Although there are some women who have changed their opinion about female circumcision, there are others who still believe in it. Despite it being made illegal in Britain since 1985, there are women who take their daughters overseas for the operation (Summerfield, 1993). The feeling is that customs in the diasporic community are deeply engrained and will not change so easily. Heema talks about the change of attitude towards customs.

Female circumcision and women's rights and things like this are so much a part of our culture. It does not constitute, I must say, the kind of trauma it constitutes for other cultures. This is something that has been buried deep down in peoples' subconsciousness. It does not anger or enrage people as it would people who have not been part of that culture for so long. People, apart from being lonely or finding friends from whatever culture or colour, age or whatever. Young people being lonely, not being with their parents, not having enough money, not finding anyone to associate with. I think there has been a change, but very little really, people have not accepted the rationale of stopping this.

So, there is also the feeling now even among people like me that supports women. We find ourselves in a position to tell young people, let's hold on to whatever we have left of our country and our culture. I find it very difficult to say we'll leave that and we'll take that. I find it safer to say... we are Somalis, this is our practice we will talk about this when we get back home we know what's happening. The more traditional and if you like the more victimised the girl is, the more all parents feel there goes one Somali child. There is hope that she might go home, or she might continue what we were...etc., etc. There are all kinds of contradictions and paradoxes if you like. (37)

Heema has summarised the mood in the community regarding circumcision. Women are aware of the dangers and health risks. They are also aware of the illegality surrounding FGC. But it is still practised. Many women still adhere to the demands of the culture. There is a sense in the community of wanting to hold on to what is left in the culture, even among educated, politically aware women like Heema.

I would like however to challenge Heema's assumption that, women are not feeling resentful or damaged. There are younger women who have been circumcised and who do harbour a sense of betrayal and anger regarding FGC. I am also aware of some participants who have circumcised their British born and raised daughters. When I asked them why, their response was to 'safeguard their daughters' reputations and virginity and to avoid gossip from their community'.

For Alia the issue of female circumcision is clearly an area she feels strongly about. Alia does not want anyone meddling with her body for whatever reason.

No, I don't think it is anyone's business to go meddling with anything that Allah has already given you. I think your parents should trust you not to go ahead and be promiscuous or whatever. Even, it is a violation of your body basically. No one should touch your body like that or mutilate you it is not fair at all. (2)

She feels parents should trust their daughters not to be promiscuous. Alia did not raise the issue of the illegality of FGC. She did not seem to see this as a civil and human rights issue. She divorces the state from religion and refers only to her moral rights in her protests against FGC. There could be an issue of the personal being private in terms of patriarchy and religion. I do not believe Alia has communicated her disagreement to her family. Her protest is to the interviewer but to no one else. She has acquiesced perhaps because the cultural and religious ties are too strong for Alia to challenge openly.

Many Somali women have actively campaigned against FGC and tried to dissuade mothers from taking their daughters abroad for circumcision. If it remains popular it is because it enhances a circumcised girl's moral reputation. Women are also the guardians of morality, and gossip about uncircumcised girls as if they were prostitutes. There was evidence that the women were more vigorous in their defence of FGC than men.

6.5 Freedom of Movement

Freedom of movement is also an area that is influenced by the religion. The movement of girls and women in migrant communities is often restricted to prevent them from mixing with members of the opposite sex outside the home. It is the fear of outside and western influences, teenage pregnancies and having boyfriends that the parents dread the most. But there is little their families can do about this. Younger Somali women who are in college or schools have greater access to meeting non-Somalis at those institutions. Young women are not normally allowed out after school, except for shopping and other legitimate family or religious activities. In some cases, girls find freedom by using excuses of school activities, homework, or visits to the library and mosque to leave the house after school or to come home later.

Somali parents guard the reputation of their daughters very closely, in order for no scandal to touch them and in turn shame the family's honour. This would then reduce the girl's chances of securing a good marriage. Khanum (1992:133) refers to 'the concept of *izzat* (chastity and honour) as central to Islamic culture. However, the burden of upholding the *izzat* of the family and community rests solely on the female members, so *izzat* is maintained by controlling women.' There is also the fear of the unknown and not wanting their children to become Christians or to forget their own religion. In this situation, families apply Islamic traditions strictly to the girls in the family especially in terms of dress and movement outside the home.

Many young Somalis want to leave home at sixteen, like many indigenous people do, whereas the religion and culture advocate parental control over children especially girls until they get married. Nuur refers to this issue.

Another thing when they are sixteen they like to leave home, just like these English people do. So that is another problem for the youngsters who come to England very young. (13)

Parents believe it is undesirable for girls to mix socially with white, Christian and non-Somali individuals and with other Somali girls who have a bad reputation. Where this happens it is often without the knowledge of the parents. Stories circulate about some parents who have disowned their schoolgirl daughters who became pregnant. It is said some schools have alerted social services where they believe a Somali child has been subjected to physical abuse, or female circumcision (El-Solh, 1993). Some Somali teenagers have requested social services to take them into care in order to escape the regime of discipline in their homes. Some young girls feel they can find greater freedom by living in care or with foster parents. Some have cited being asked to undertake too much housework and being treated like a slave. Those who are old enough have left home and gone to live by themselves, or to share a flat with other young women. There are households without the parents but with older siblings in charge, where it is easier for conflict to break out. The authority of an older sibling can be more easily challenged than that of a parent. Where the mother is a single parent who does not speak English, she may often be even more restrictive of her daughters' movements. The daughters on the other hand are able to exploit their

mother's lack of English to have more access to the outside world to undertake errands for the family.

Some young women who come to Britain with relatives have left home to live by themselves. They are negotiating access and socialising with their non-Somali friends. As mentioned earlier, there is little anyone within the community can do to restrict their independence, except to criticise the woman through a male relative or clan member. The religion and tradition are the main instruments parents use to restrict the movements of their daughters. The following case outlines how freedom of movement can cause conflict in a household.

Case 6c

Halima, aged 17 came to Britain with her older married sister Mariam aged 32, her sister's five children aged under 12 and a younger brother called Yusuf aged 13. Yusuf and Halima came to Britain as Mariam's children. The family had purchased forged passports that showed Mariam as their mother. Their parents had been killed in the Somali civil war. Halima lived with her family in London and she attended a secondary school. Halima's age had been lowered to 15 when she entered Britain on her forged passport. Mariam's husband was in Somalia, he was unable to obtain a visa to join his family. Mariam did not speak English and she did not have any formal education. Mariam relied on her brother and sister to interpret for her and to act as advocates. Mariam's time was taken up with caring for her children, dealing with housing and social security problems and with visiting a solicitor to work on her husband's case for family reunion.

Halima began to resent the amount of time she spent doing housework and looking after her nieces and nephews. She began coming home late after school and using the after-school homework clubs and Koran classes in the mosque as an excuse. Mariam argued with Halima after she had heard reports that Halima was not wearing her headscarf. Halima would wear the headscarf when she left the house and remove it in the street. Mariam also heard rumours that Halima was socialising with white and African Caribbean young people at the youth club and attending parties instead of attending Koranic classes, the library and homework clubs.

Their quarrels become more frequent. Halima said that Mariam was not her mother and she could do what she liked. Mariam pleaded with Halima that she was a Muslim and that she should obey her family. Her behaviour was shaming her family and that she was following western Christian behaviour. Mariam asked a sheikh to speak to Halima about her religious obligations as a Muslim woman towards herself and her family. Halima started spending time at her friend's house and sleeping over there. Mariam was unhappy about this and she complained that Halima was a single woman who should be staying with her family. After more arguments Halima complained to Social Services that Mariam was not her mother but her sister. She also told the authorities her real age, that she was 17. She asked to be moved out of the family home. Halima left secondary school and went to college. She started

sharing a flat with two other Somali women. Her rent was paid by housing benefit. She enjoyed her independence and she was entitled to claim social security benefits. Mariam was upset and concerned about how Halima's behaviour would affect her own daughters' reputations. She feared people would gossip about her children as being the relatives of a woman who became westernised and followed Christian peoples' behaviour.

There are many newly arrived young women like Halima who are torn between two cultures. When women like Halima exercise their autonomy they are accused of bringing shame on the family because the religion and culture restrict women's movements to the home environment.

Farida talks about cases where young women have more freedom of movement in Britain and how this has caused problems in some families.

Another issue is that in Somalia, if there are boys and girls in a family, the boys will be able to go out and the girls must stay in doors. Girls are not allowed to have boyfriends. You will never see boys and girls living together in Somalia, it is not known. When they come here, they found freedom. The government will pay rent for a flat. Then a young 18 year old girl will complain to her mother saying you don't maintain me or pay my rent. Her mother will not know whom she goes around with, or who comes to her house, or which night-club she has just come from. All this was not known in Somalia, especially in the North as there are no clubs. Women of loose morals frequent the clubs in Hargeisa. The ordinary women do not go to clubs, it is not permitted. Therefore the girls have more freedom here. It is wrong for an 18 year old Muslim girl to leave her mother's home to live by herself. (38)

According to Farida, in northern Somalia, people with loose morals visit night-clubs and Muslims girls should not leave their family home. The religion regulates women's behaviour and their socialisation. This produces a conflict for young women who want to access the supposed 'freedom' they perceive their peers to be enjoying.

Farida would like to retain most aspects of her culture and not make any overt or conscious changes in her family life. The aspects of culture she raises are dress, leisure and respecting her husband as the head of the household.

I think Somali culture is good. It is good in that there are many things that are done here that we don't do in our country. I don't like to wear clothes that are very short, like what some girls wear here. I don't like to go to pubs and discos. I don't want to behave like an English person who is denying they are Somali. I don't want to change my culture for example in family life. I don't want to be someone who is dominating her husband, as the white people do. I want to continue to follow my culture. (38)

Farida believes that her culture promotes family life which is very important to her. She believes that western women dominate their husbands. She wants her husband to feel he is the head of the household so she does not allow her husband to do any household chores except the shopping. Farida has embraced her religion and she is keen to be seen to show her full commitment to Islam in the home as a good Muslim wife.

There are educated former professional Somali women in Britain who visited nightclubs and discos in Somalia. In Britain, these women are now married and they socialise within the Somali community and they would not visit nightclubs in Britain because they are older and married. Many Somali women regarded anything western and Christian as bad, negative and immoral. However, many of the practices they condemned such as discos and night-clubs were found in most modern societies and most practising Christians did not visit such places either. It was younger people who tended to visit such establishments. When asked about aspects of British culture that they liked, 4 per cent of participants (2 aged 18 – 25) liked pubs and 16 percent (6 aged 18-25, 1 aged 26-33 and 1 aged 34-41) liked night-clubs/discos. These low figures are because participants appear to connect visiting such establishments as being un-Islamic and part of western British culture.

Ali (1992) describes women from minority ethnic communities who create their own space and empowerment within fundamentalist movements. Paradoxically, being active in a religious movement can enable a woman to legitimise her presence in a public domain that she can use to her advantage. This ties up with the reference made above to girls using Islamic classes and the mosque as an excuse to be able to have more freedom of movement. Parents are keen for their daughters to have a good religious educational grounding so they are happy to allow them out to attend religious events. Somali women visit mosques for religious, social and educational purposes, a practice that was not common in Northern Somalia (El-Solh, 1993). Therefore migration has enhanced a woman's freedom of movement outside the family domain and it has also improved her religious observance and knowledge. Women also use religion to regularise their own movements, dress and behaviour, and that of other women by means of social and peer pressure for others to conform.

Suad states that God did not create men equally. If a woman goes out she should dress modestly.

God did not create them equally. Men are 100 and women are 50³. We are following the traditions and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him). The women and men are not equal. If the woman has a comfortable home, she should stay at home and not go out. If she goes out, she should cover her body. If she is killed, the compensation is 50 and if the man is killed it is 100. (43)

Suad is clear about the restrictions placed upon women and how she follows the traditions and sayings (*hadith*) of the Prophet that women should stay at home if they are well off enough. This ties in with Mernissi's (1985) reference to *purdah* or seclusion of Muslim women being the prerogative of the rich. A woman's freedom of movement is not allowed according to Islamic principles (Tames, 1982). Most Somali women did not have a habit of seclusion. Suad talks about the Islamic principles on women's movement but she and her daughters actually move about London freely to pursue her household obligations and to socialise with her friends and relatives.

When Raho (a divorcee) was married she was prepared to disobey her husband and her religion if she needed to go out on an important mission like a funeral, if she feels her husband is being particularly oppressive and malicious. Raho chooses to exercise her autonomy selectively.

No, I have to tell him. No, I can't go out. If it is a party or something like that I can stay, but if it is something more serious like a funeral or a wake I don't think any reasonable man will try to stop me from that. So I would have to go to that. Although going anywhere without permission is against Islamic principles, yet I would still go. Some of my reasons have their origin in the religion and some in the culture. There are some bad men who like to oppress women and if my decision is to stay with him then I just have to accept it. If I am living with that kind of man, it means that I have accepted worse things than not going to a party something that is trivial. Even if it is a matter of somebody dying or very ill, the religion says I should obey my husband, but I think I would go.(31)

Raho is being honest in her response above. She says she will obey her husband as the religion demands but she is prepared to go out without his permission if the occasion warrants it. Raho is now divorced and speaks English so she is able to go out on her own if

3 The compensation to the relatives of a woman who has been killed is half that paid for a man.

she needs to without anyone to help her with interpreting or directions.

Muna has decided to follow the instructions of the Koran regarding freedom of movement. She will not leave the house unless her husband has given her his permission, although she knows he will not mind.

In our religion the Koran says that whenever you want to go out you must take permission from your husband. I am following the instructions of the Koran. I don't want to go against my husband, although he won't mind if I go out. (48)

I believe Muna would go out if necessary because women are responsible for most household tasks like shopping etc. It is only when it concerns social events that women might request permission from their husbands. On the other hand it is my impression that most husbands are actually only concerned about their wives' movements because of childcare: because they are not prepared to look after the children themselves.

Some married women are making overtly patriarchal bargains with their husbands to appear to be 'good' Muslim wives. Many women are in fact able to control where they go and what they do in London. Living in Britain has provided the women with the freedom to exercise their autonomy and behave in ways that other women believe are against their religion. Leyla describes this change in lifestyle with sarcasm.

Many Somalis have changed. Why shouldn't they change? They wear short clothes, and they wear revealing clothes that are not part of their culture. They go to bars to dance, if they want they drink alcohol, they can even abandon their religion if they so wish and they can take up Christianity. (5)

Leyla takes a traditional approach to women's behaviour and she is clearly unhappy by what she regards as the excesses of some women's behaviour. She is saying sarcastically, why not go all the way and become a Christian? Leyla's knowledge of Christianity is however limited because most practising Christian women also lead conservative lifestyles. She accepts Somali myths and stereotypes about Christianity. Western women are equated with promiscuity and immorality.

The way women's behaviour is measured is by their degree of adherence to accepted religious norms like in dress and socialising with non-Somalis. Any deviation from these norms is regarded as behaving in a Christian Western way. Somali women go to great lengths

to conceal any non-adherence due to fear of gossip.

6.6 Division of labour and resources and 'obeying' their husbands and fathers

This section will explore the impact of religion on the division of labour in the home. Many Somali women were keen to preserve the status quo (regarding gender relations) to have an easier life. They sought comfort and support from their women's network. This kinship network was wide flung, extending overseas to Somali communities in Europe, North America, the Middle East and back in Somalia. Therefore whatever happened in Britain would be relayed to all far corners of the globe. The myth of return which Anwar (1979) wrote about within the Pakistani community in Britain, was also present in the Somali community, and this was why families were keen to maintain honour and reputation within the cultural boundaries.

Men maintained their household position of head of the family based on respect the women accorded them, which came from their religious values. Mothers taught their daughters as part of the socialisation process as Muslim wives to respect their husbands, sons and fathers (Mernissi, 1985).

Nuur believes women should respect their husbands because of the religious norms that advocate this factor. She felt many women are starting to disrespect their husbands.

The reason I say that, the thing is, our culture does not say that, our religion does not say that, I mean our religion says we are Muslims, we should respect the husbands. We should remember, still remember, that and respect the husbands I think.(13)

Nuur also goes on to talk about religion and gender equality. Women will not be able to share household power with men, if they are not seen as equal to them. She acknowledges and accepts that the religion oppresses women. Nuur has understood the power of certain interpretations of religious text to support the existing status quo that women are not equal to men.

If the women always think they are behind. And they will be behind because they follow what the religion says, because our religion says we will never be equal to men. And that is what women believe religion says so that's it, yeah.(13)

Farrah supports men's superiority over women as stated in the religion. God's wisdom is not to be questioned in giving men greater physical strength than women.

No, as God said that men and women are not equal. God has more wisdom than mankind, he knows best. If we look at it from another angle, there are things that men can do that we cannot do. Men are stronger than us in many different ways. It is best to leave God's wisdom as it is, as men and women are not equal.

Somali men and women are not equal, just as I said above. For example when the Somali civil war started you could see a man carrying his grandmother on his back for more than 500 kilometres and this shows that men have got more endurance for such traumatic experiences than women. In a war situation a man will walk for three hundred kilometres to fetch water for his wife and children who are sitting under a tree waiting. The woman could be bigger and stronger physically but I don't think women can do this. Men have more stamina. (15)

The belief that women are not equal to men is a common theme among many of the women I interviewed. According to Madina

It is not good, as it is a crime in the religion to say there is equality for men and women as they are different physically. However, it is possible for men and women to be equal. As whatever a man can do a woman can do. If a girl goes to the university, so can a man. They are equal in terms of humanity and achievements. They can never be equal in the religion as God has not made it so.(1)

There are differences between what Madina is saying and what she actually believes. There are also internal contradictions within what she says. Madina regards the notion of gender equality as a religious crime but she accepts that it is possible for a woman to achieve the same tasks mentally as a man, but still believes according to the religion that they are not equal. Madina also feels that in daily life there is the possibility of equality in terms of access to education, employment and so on. However, she believes that according to Islam there is no question of gender equality.

This attitude has implications for the treatment of male and female children, and for gender relations between men and women. Women are deferential to men because of the religion and culture although they may have the same educational and employment background. It is an interesting comment made by Madina, that in terms of achievements there can be equality between the sexes but not according to religion. So if the religion states that women are inferior to men this is what is taken as the truth. This is a fundamental weakness that men

can exploit and this paradigm ensures women's subservience to men within the household.

Muna who had a negative response when asked about Somali women's equality, linked culture to equality.

No, because Somali men are a little bit higher than women due to the culture and the religion. The men are seen as the head of the family. (48)

There is again the link to the religion and culture which she goes on to explain provides women with respect. A woman's role is prescribed for her and participants believe a Muslim woman has more respect than other women because of her dress and character. This belief is related to the modest dress and the strict segregation of the sexes which is prescribed by the Koran.

Alia feels very strongly that men and women should share housework equally.

Yes, because why should the woman do all the work? It should be equal basically, the woman could go out and do some work, go out and get a job. Maybe the man may be working as well, but basically at the end of the day you have had a hard day's work, it should not be up to the woman to have to do more work as well. They should split it up equally, basically.(2)

Alia believes in the equal division of household labour. In practice what takes place in the household does not reflect her views. The women still do most of the housework.

On the other hand, the treatment of Somali women equates with sexism according to Habiba.

There is a lot of sexism in Somali culture. You have to stay at home and look after the kids, and make the dinner, clean the house, have loads of kids. (36)

Habiba's views are clear but what happens in her household reflects what she has described. The women are responsible for doing all the work in her household. Habiba has been unable to challenge her family's household practices. There are examples above of women who use the religion to justify the unequal division of labour in their homes. There are others like Habiba and Alia who dislike the gender inequality but feel powerless to challenge it because of the strong religious and cultural values in the home.

Women who believed that the religion made men superior to women were not able to argue for a sharing of the division of household labour. Those who did argue for it were seen as

challenging the religion.

6.7 Conclusion

The majority of women were content with their religion and culture through which they defined their identity in Britain, although they acknowledged that their religion and culture contained some oppressive practices such as female circumcision and unequal division of labour. The Islamic marriage is a contractual agreement that provides security for a woman's role as wife and mother. Muslim women have been given the role of passing on traditions and cultural values to their children, although those in Somalia (as elsewhere) were not well versed in the teachings of the Koran. Muslim women saw positive aspects in their Koranic rights to keep their name, protection of their property and inheritance rights. The Islamic religion does influence Somali women's choice of marriage partner and behaviour. The religion and the culture are inextricably linked. Although many Somali women are claiming their right to choose whether and whom to marry, if their partners are non-Muslim this could cause a major problem in the family that could lead to ostracism. Participants generally accepted that their children would choose their own marriage partners, but wanted them to marry Muslims. Marriage is very important within Islam because the religion will be continued through any children. There are social, cultural and religious pressures on women to conform to the expected modest behaviour in dress, sexual freedom, division of household labour and resources, freedom of movement, and choice of marriage partner. Islam sanctions divorce as a last resort. Many women are turning to their religion for spiritual comfort and guidance to enable them to deal with their domestic problems. There is a belief among the participants that women without education are the ones who are initiating divorces. Whereas the educated women are the ones who turn to their religion for guidance.

Religion does restrict a Muslim woman's boundaries to her family and legitimate tasks outside a home. A woman is also expected to take permission from her husband when she wants to go outside the home. Young people are keen to leave home which conflicts with cultural and religious norms. Young women are able to use their education, religious worship and employment as excuses to leave the home.

Chapter 7

THE STATE

Most Somali women came to Britain as refugees fleeing persecution. This produced immediate restrictions surrounding their lifestyles in Britain. Legal restrictions while they seek asylum can affect the right to work, access to education, where they live and the freedom to travel abroad. Earlier work on race was often on legal economic migrants therefore Black women in Britain are often analysed as immigrant workers or the wives of immigrant workers.

In this chapter, I will explore the experiences of the Somali women participants and their interaction with the state. I will explore how the poorer the women the more oppressive is their experience of the state. This chapter will cover immigration and welfare rights, the police, housing, health, and access to information.

7.1 Immigration and Welfare Rights

The immigration status of the participants is important because 37 of the women have been given exceptional leave to remain (ELR). ELR status meant that while the situation in Somalia was unstable they would be allowed to stay in Britain. Addo (1994:97) clarifies the situation.

De facto Refugees are granted exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom at the discretion of the Home Secretary. This last category consists of persons unable to satisfy the strict requirements of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol but who nevertheless demonstrate reasons to fear persecution in their home country (Addo, 1994).

Four participants were waiting for responses to their asylum application and only one had been granted full refugee status. Two participants were born in Britain and six had been granted British citizenship. The type of immigration status allocated to an asylum seeker was also a determining factor in whether they were able to bring over their dependant children and spouse under the family reunion rule. The concerns that participants had over their

immigration status affected their personal, social and physical well being. Since only one person had full refugee status in this study and 37 had ELR, this meant their status was insecure. The majority of Somalis are normally given ELR status, which has to be renewed periodically. They have to wait four years before they can apply for family reunion for any dependant children aged under 18, and their married partner to join them. In exceptional compassionate circumstances these requirements can be waived. The ELR status also meant the women were apprehensive about their settlement in Britain because in theory, if the immigration authorities believed the situation in Somalia to be stable, they could be asked to return. Those women with children felt especially vulnerable. The participants with children and husbands left behind in Somalia were affected by health problems like depression, and insomnia. Some Somali women had spent thousands of pounds trying to get visas, passports and maintenance support for their families in Somalia. For these women the healing process of recovering from the trauma of the civil war was put on hold while they dealt with the rigours of adjustment to British life, and the trips to and from the Home Office to seek family reunion and responses to their asylum cases.

It is clear that the immigration status accorded to women in Britain is a factor in their ability to challenge the cultural and religious status quo in their community. Women express the challenge in their assuming freedom of movement and demand for a change in power dynamics in the household. A Somali woman is more confident that she can make decisions about her lifestyle when her husband or father does not have control over her immigration status. Moreover, many Somali women are registered independently from their husbands for the purpose of immigration status because they came to Britain separately. Therefore, if their husbands left the country or divorced them their immigration status would not be directly affected. The women who came to Britain alone with their children become settled and used to running their household and making decisions, before husbands joined them, if indeed they had done so. Within the Somali community in Britain there are many lone mother families. In many cases the mother would be the main adult in the home living with her own children and some relatives' children. She could also have her mother, aunt, sister or other female relatives living with her. But lone mothers are quite common in refugee communities and this can be due to a number of factors including death, divorce and separation. The availability of welfare benefits has enabled Somali women to survive as lone mother families. Lone mother families

have low incomes, which leave them in a poverty trap (Edwards, 1996). More families are beginning to live individualised lives in exile as opposed to communal extended ones (Eastmond, 1993). Feminist research has demonstrated that lone motherhood is increasingly associated with poverty. Women whether in a two parent or lone parent family are usually responsible for the housework, housekeeping and for trying to make ends meet. The situation of women being dependent on the state for all or most of their income is also a factor in poverty.

Airlines check passengers' visas and passports before check in and some are turned away and not allowed to fly to Britain because they lack the necessary documents. However, of necessity, many asylum seekers often use forged documents and visas because of the danger they face in approaching the authorities in their country of origin for passports. Many asylum seekers are detained upon arrival in Britain when they apply for asylum. There were 317 asylum seekers detained in 1993 and 864 by 1 October 1996 (Shutter, 1997).

At the time I did my research these new proposals were due to come into place. New legislation on immigration and asylum was passed in the 1998/1999 Parliamentary Session. There are more than 52,000 asylum seekers waiting for a first decision on their case, and over 21,000 waiting for appeal decisions. Around 10,000 have been waiting since 1993 to get an answer from the government. This means that the majority of the participants in my study, along with other asylum seekers, are unable to get on with their lives because there is the constant threat of removal from the country hanging over their heads. The new proposals expand immigration detention places and take away any remaining rights to welfare benefits for all asylum seekers. It set up a new national agency to run a programme of 'support in kind' for asylum seekers across the country (this is a cashless system to provide housing, food and other essentials). Denials of access to welfare benefits or decent housing force many asylum seekers into poverty and causes hardship, health problems and destitution (Refugee Council, 1998). The effect of the new asylum measures means that participants have to accommodate their friends and relatives who are asylum seekers and who are not entitled to income support or housing from the government. This poses a severe strain on families with already meagre resources.

Somali women find it hard to navigate the difficulties involved in the immigration process when making a claim for refugee status. This is due to lack of documentation, paperwork, and the stress of trying to remember consistent dates and facts. In March 1993, Canada introduced gender guidelines, which took into consideration the abuses women refugees suffered when processing their refugee claims. However, very few Somali women would make a refugee claim based on rape or sexual abuse because of the big stigma of such incidents in Somali society, although some would qualify under the gender guidelines. Another recent change in the law affecting asylum seekers is that income support and housing benefit too, is now denied to people who did not immediately claim asylum at the port of entry. However, a High Court Judgement in October 1996 established that local authorities have a duty under the 1948 National Assistance Act to provide services to asylum seekers with no other means of support (Refugee Council, 1996). Generally, the participants who entered Britain in 1990 – 1995, had waited for up to 3 years for a response and they were not happy with the bureaucracy of the immigration service. While they were grateful to be provided with asylum, the years of waiting for a response on their immigration status has led many women to become ill and depressed.

At the time of the main fieldwork in 1993-1994, women who were no longer cast as the dependants of men in immigration law, were able to claim income support and social security benefits in their own name, unlike families where the man received benefits on behalf of his family. They were entitled to housing benefit that paid their rent and child benefit, which was paid directly to them. Women who benefited from these circumstances were ones whose legal status was independent from their husband's. In giving unemployed people income support, for which most Somali asylum seekers were eligible, the British government enabled women to obtain decision-making status in the household. Hawo describes the diminution in men's role in the Somali household.

The problem is now women because they have no work; they don't see men as any longer responsible, you know for family income. They don't see men as important as they were at home, because everyone is looked after by the British. That was the role that men used to have, the breadwinners and the head of the family. But now they no longer have that role. So women are saying, "you have no right to shout at me, to tell me what to do. I am being looked after by the British government, so what the hell are you controlling me for?" It is like that. It is not all of them. It is not every family, just some people. The other thing is that, men, because of being refugees, and not working also has an effect on men. They no longer see themselves as important at home. They feel they are redundant, they are not needed, they are not

wanted.(34)

The effect of being a refugee made the men feel unwanted and unable to fulfil their role of provider for the family.

Somali women encountered some problems during the collection of social security benefits.

Case 7a

The fact that many women are registered as single mothers means that they officially do not have a husband. However, these women are producing young babies regularly and the Social Security department would like to find out if they are co-habiting with someone. One woman took her husband to translate for her at an interview with the Social Security department. The woman was registered as a single mother and she took two of her children with her. She introduced her husband as a friend who had come along to interpret for her. The mother was unaware that the interview was being videotaped and her son was caught on camera calling the interpreter 'dad'. During the next visit she was confronted with this evidence and she confessed that her husband was living with her. She then had to declare her husband's income and her benefits were reassessed.

A woman who has a man living with her, as a husband or partner will have both incomes assessed to determine the level of income support due to the family. The woman's home may be put under surveillance by the Social Security Department to ascertain whether any man (husband or boyfriend) lives with her. This intrusion into a Somali woman's life only happens because as an asylum seeker she is dependent on the state for her livelihood. The state is more intrusive into a poor woman's life. Lone mother social security claimants are subject to a higher degree of suspicion of involvement in benefit fraud, because the State (since it wishes to minimise entitlements) assumes that there must be an economic relationship when couples live together. Benefit fraud is often committed by women who are living on low incomes, as opposed to large-scale organised benefit fraud like housing benefit fraud by landlords (Pantazis, 1999). The patriarchal family principles underpin the welfare state policies and lone mothers are seen as being 'between men' rather than as alternative heads of households (Wilson, 1977).

It was also easier for young women in female-headed households to decide whether and whom to marry in the absence of the patriarchal authority of the father. Their choice is limited however due to the influence clan membership has over marriage. A woman would

rarely marry out of her clan. Somalis take clan membership very seriously and this developed to a quasi-legal status level during the Somali civil war when anarchy reigned. For example, many Somali men and women were killed solely because of their particular clan membership. In Britain a woman's status as a second rank clan member has worked for and against Somali women. For an example it worked against them in so far, as Kapteijns (1994) remarked, that names of women killed in the civil war were not on the lists circulating in London (see chapter 2, 2.1.4). This meant that in their asylum applications, persecution and threats to their lives based on their clan membership were not taken as seriously as those of men who were making a claim on the same basis. On a more positive note, women were more likely to make friendships across clan memberships than men. So women living in an area in Britain with only a few other Somali families were more likely to make friends across the clan divide and to support each other. So there are political and personal dimensions to clan membership.

Divorce is allowed in the Koran. It might appear that women are taking advantage of their immigration status in Britain to initiate divorce proceedings. They have access to welfare rights, housing and health care. So they do not have to depend on their husbands for financial maintenance. Somali women are also aware that there is legislation that protects them against domestic violence, which is prevalent in the community. This knowledge gives a woman more say in the household because she may not be afraid to speak up if her husband is threatening her. But I believe women are actually disadvantaged rather than helped by the parallel legal system that operates within the Somali community. In the UK polygamy is not recognised so Somali men with two wives tend to leave one overseas, normally in Somalia. Also women who are married under Islamic law (which is not recognised by the state) may not be able to claim financial support from their employed husbands because their marriage is not recognised.

Women informed me that the Child Support Agency (CSA) has been sending letters to Somali fathers' employers to deduct income from their wages for their children's support. In fact the 1991 Child Support Act that came into force in 1993, compels women claiming benefit to name the father of their children so he can be chased for maintenance payments. There is a provision in the Act for women who have a 'good cause' to fear they will experience 'harm or distress' to be exempted from revealing the name of their children's

father. The implementation of this provision is left to the discretion of the local CSA. Child support payments can put ex-partners in contact with women and children who may be at risk from further abuse or harassment (Hague, 1999). The Child Support Act 1991 was set up to ensure that biological parents pay and share maintenance for their children, even if one parent has never lived with the children. The main aim behind the legislation was to reduce state benefit support by making absent biological parents pay child support and maintenance instead of the State (Hester and Harne, 1999).

There are essentially two conflicts regarding freedom of movement. One is the restriction on movement posed by immigration status. The women are unable to leave Britain and to travel abroad (because they do not have any travel documents) until a decision has been made on their asylum case, and as already noted this can take years to sort out. There are also restrictions on how long a person can remain outside Britain if they want to retain their rights to reside here. This situation affects Somali women if they need to return to Somalia to care for elderly parents and other relatives.

The other is the restriction placed on young women's freedom of movement by parents. Young women feel they have more freedom of movement in Britain because their parents are unable to monitor all their movements. Some young people are aware of their rights under the Children Act (1989). Section 47 covers child protection and local authorities have to investigate where they believe a child is suffering significant harm (Farmer and Boushel, 1999). Some young Somali people threaten to report their parents/carers to Social Services for child abuse if they are not allowed more freedom of movement. Other young women are aware of their legal rights to live separately from their parents after the age of 18.

7.2 The Police

The information I obtained from participants about the police concerned Somali women threatening to call the police to evict their husbands from the marital home due to domestic violence. Women have also come into contact with the police due to the alleged criminal activity of mainly their male relatives. There have been convictions of Somali men for crimes such as burglary, robbery, rape and drugs. The women have been to police stations, prisons, courts and centres where asylum seekers have been detained, in support of their relatives who have been charged with various offences. Women who have been victims of crime have also come into contact with the police. Some women have been stopped and questioned by police on their way home from friends' homes at night or while driving cars. Many women have language difficulties and they need interpreters. Somali women will have fewer encounters with the police than African Caribbean women because most of them are not in paid employment, they do not drive cars and they spend most of their time at home.

Mama's (1989) study is on African and Caribbean women's experience of domestic violence. She revealed that such women are subjected to violence from men in the home, to societal racism and to state repression. Her study reported that the police response could be helpful in getting a woman and her children to a safe place, but the police rarely enforced the law and prosecuted the woman's attacker. There were also reports of Black men and women being both treated punitively by the police when called to intervene in domestic violence. Or when police were called to a home to deal with domestic violence they might concentrate on immigration issues instead. Mama also reported cases of police being called to homes for domestic violence and using the opportunity to assault a Black man, and on one occasion physically assaulting and racially and sexually ridiculing a Black woman. Following the 1999 Macpherson Report recommendations into the murder of the Black teenager Stephen Lawrence, there are Community Safety Units (CSUs) in every London Borough. The CSUs are staffed with local authority staff and police officers specially trained to investigate and monitor hate crimes of domestic violence, racial and homophobic attacks. The CSUs ensure that the police have a more sympathetic and vigorous response to domestic violence in the 1990s than in the days when the police did not intervene in 'domestics'.

Mama's research also revealed that many African Caribbean women might be deterred from

calling the police. This is because of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) of 1984, which empowers the police to compel the woman to prosecute, even if she did not want to. The situation in the Somali community is different because it was mainly women with their own independent legal status who were calling the police to evict their violent husband's in the late 1990s. Mama's research also revealed that in the 1980s abusive husbands would threaten their wives with the police and deportation during domestic conflicts. This was when more Asian and African women were dependent on their husband's immigration status for their right to stay in Britain as wives and fiancées. In these cases the women may not know their rights (they may even have independent legal status) or speak fluent English and their husbands dominated the conversation with the police who are often called by neighbours to intervene in domestic disputes.

What Somalis share in common with other women is the fact that mothers with low literacy levels, on low incomes who depend on state benefits will have more oppressive encounters with the state through the police, social services and the immigration services. Very few Somali women chew *khat* (which is a legal drug) so they would not have had contact with the police for that. Whereas there are men who chew *khat* and commit crimes or they are detained under the Mental Health Act while hallucinating and being disruptive in public.

7.3 Housing

Somali families on arrival in Britain have to seek shelter. Their housing situation is important to this study because the kind of housing and the location can affect a woman's quality of life.

I will first give the context of the national housing situation in the UK, and how this affects asylum seekers generally before giving specific examples from this study.

The housing situation has adversely affected many Somali families most of whom lived in social housing. Without paid employment or regular income very few Somalis were able to purchase their own homes. The housing situation facing asylum seekers upon arrival in the UK has changed considerably since the 1970s. The shift nationally in housing has been away from public sector housing and private rented accommodation to more owner-occupied housing. The 'Right to Buy' scheme allowed council tenants to purchase their council houses and flats, and

thereby diminished the availability of public housing stock. Legislation (Housing Acts of 1980, 1985, 1986, and 1988) restricted the building of more public housing. The management of public housing is being transferred to housing associations and the private sector.

The effect of these changes in the housing market has meant that more refugees and asylum seekers, especially single people, sought housing in private rented accommodation. There has been a rise in the increase in homeless households since the 1980s, due to high levels of unemployment and the decrease in public housing stock. This has resulted in refugees and asylum seekers having to compete with other homeless people for the limited public sector housing available (Carey-Wood et al, 1995).

When single Somali women asylum seekers arrived in the UK they were mainly assigned to Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation in London. Farrah describes the life of women in B&B.

There are women who have become surprised at this life, many cry in the hotels for 24 hours. There are some who have become mentally disturbed. (15)

Participants' length of stay in this type of temporary accommodation varied from a few months to a few years.

Many of the participants in this study who had children were also housed in temporary accommodation but in private rented houses or flats. This was due in some London Boroughs to a policy move away from placing families in B & B type accommodation. One participant was in temporary accommodation for five years. She faced the difficulty that she could be asked to move at any time to wherever permanent accommodation was found for her. Her children's schooling was affected by the need to move house. High mobility is a factor affecting Somali women in London generally. Some women instigated the moves themselves due to various factors including wanting to live near friends and relatives, racism, overcrowding, and poor quality housing.

The participants who had lived in B & B accommodation reported poor conditions. For example, the bedrooms were on the top floor and the kitchen in the basement, which meant going up and down the stairs to cook. There were cockroaches and overcrowding. There was

harassment from other lodgers and sharing bathrooms and toilets. Many single women participants therefore tried to lodge with relatives and friends. If they did this, they later moved out into private rented furnished flats where the rent was paid for by housing benefit. The participants who were in B & B hotels were later rehoused into council and housing association properties.

The housing conditions of participants at the time of interview varied enormously. 78 per cent of participants lived in forms of social housing (council housing, housing association flats or houses). Some 8 per cent rented private accommodation (paid for through housing benefit), mostly houses in good neighbourhoods. I did not have information on the housing conditions of the other 14 per cent. Some women with children lived in council flats, which were too small and there was overcrowding. Some 26 per cent complained of overcrowding in their accommodation. 28 per cent of participants complained of living in poor housing conditions with damp patches on walls. 20 per cent had inadequate heating, which generally meant there was no central heating in the accommodation. 34 per cent of the participants lived in council accommodation on housing estates. Only half lived near other Somalis. Most of the participants from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets lived near other Somali families, this was seen as being advantageous to avoid isolation. One participant who arrived in Britain in the late 1950s had decided to stay in east London rather than move to better accommodation in west London where she would have been isolated and lonely. 68 per cent of participants lived in working class neighbourhoods.

There were four (8 per cent) participants who lived in their own homes and had mortgages. These women had come to Britain in the 1950s-1960s and they had purchased their former council houses. Most of the participants received housing benefit; one participant who was employed received family credit which is designed to top up low incomes.

The majority of the participants' homes I visited had formal sitting rooms with three piece suites, some had Arab style cushions on the floors for seating, televisions, stereos and video cassette recorders. There was a computer for the children in one home purchased by an older sibling who was working. Most sitting rooms had Islamic decorations on the walls, which indicated the importance of Islam to the family. In Somalia, the living rooms in most urban

households are formally decorated and reserved for visitors, children are not allowed to play there. In some of the participants' households (where there were enough rooms), the sitting room was also out of bounds to children. The children played in a room designated as the family room. Most families upon moving to permanent suitable accommodation set the same system up.

The family of Mariam who lived on a council estate complained of racial harassment. Their flat was in poor decorative condition, and mould from damp grew on the walls. The children had chest complaints and breathing related illnesses such as asthma and bronchitis. The sitting room was sparsely furnished and Mariam lived in fear of being attacked by young boys who racially abused her and threw eggs at her windows.

Our car was stolen and vandalised, our family were victims of racism. Our house was broken into, every evening when I am sleeping they knock on the door. Every time they throw eggs and other things at me. I have had many problems in this estate. The neighbours insult me, throw stones and I was struck on the head by a milk bottle. (3)

A few years later I visited Mariam's new home. She had been rehoused in to a house on a new housing estate. There were many other Somali families on the estate. She had bought new furniture and the house was well equipped and brightly decorated in contrast to her previous accommodation. She also appeared in good spirits. Mariam's case points to a connection between the housing conditions of participants and their mental state.

A participant called Farrah also complained of being racially attacked on her council estate. She was a lone parent and her washing had been taken from the line and deliberately dropped in the mud. She had been slapped and racially abused by a white woman neighbour over a dispute between their young sons. Her children could not play out safely and she felt constantly under pressure and harassed.

A single mother has many problems here. It is most likely that a woman is put in a bed and breakfast hotel, where the children are not allowed to make any noise as there are people who live beneath you. (15)

These changes in space and type of housing are very difficult for a Somali woman to adjust to in Britain. There was a lot of space in Somalia for children to play outside in safety.

Racial harassment was a theme that ran throughout most of the interviews. Many participants

talked about moving out of inner London with its poor housing, racial attacks and over crowded schools to the outer London suburbs. One participant actually moved to west London after we finished our interview. She moved from a three-bedroom, fifth floor council estate flat to a rented house with a garden in the suburbs. Studies have revealed that Black women suffered from racial assaults, racial abuse and damage to their properties in all sectors of housing – private, public and owner-occupied. Some local authorities used powers in legislation to take court action against perpetrators of racial attacks by evicting them from their properties. However, it was often the victims of racial attacks who were transferred to another property (Woods, 1996). As women saw their friends escape to the suburbs from the confines of the inner city, more wanted to make the escape. Even if it meant leaving the areas where their relatives and friends lived.

7.4 Health

The needs of Black women have generally not been addressed within British social policy. Refugees in addition are also seen as state welfare scroungers, and stereotyped as 'breeding like rabbits' to have children to get access to welfare funds. Black women's qualitative experience of welfare is different from White women's. Black women were more likely to be given abortions and long-term contraception because women of African descent were seen as promiscuous. Asian women were seen as having a high fertility rate and were not provided with adequate contraception and family planning (Nasir, 1996).

Somali women in Britain have access to the national health services provided by the state. However, the take up of services like contraception by Somali women was low due to cultural and religious reasons. Most women also needed interpreters to access information on health. Women preferred to be seen by female doctors especially for intimate gynaecological problems. This was not always possible, so many Somali women did not find the doctors and hospitals accessible. Many pregnant Somali women were given caesarean sections when giving birth because of their infibulation stitches, even if they did not want or need the operation. They were not aware of their rights as patients and many could not express themselves in English well enough to assert their rights. Some Somali women were making use of the National Health Service (NHS) to have an operation to reverse their

infibulation without their parents having any control in this matter.

Harper-Bulman (1997) did some research on Somali women's experience of the maternity services in London. She found there was unequal access to services due to inadequate interpreting services. Somali women also experienced stereotyping and racism from health service staff due to their lack of understanding and cultural differences. The health service staff did not know how to manage Female Genital Cutting (FGC) in pregnancy and labour. Somali women were unhappy with the level of care and support provided by some hospital midwives and doctors. The language barriers meant that Somali women did not have sufficient information about the availability of pain relief and the options and choices for their delivery and postnatal care. Harper-Bulman recommended a regular clinic for African women with interpreters and link workers and training for midwives and doctors on FGC and Somali culture.

As noted there is legislation that makes FGC illegal in Britain. Most Somali women are aware of their legal rights regarding FGC, through campaigns and awareness raising initiatives by voluntary organisations such as London Black Women's Health Action Group (see chapter 5). Many women also know they should not carry out the practice or allow it to be done to their daughters. But as Heema says:

A lot of them are obeying the law, a lot of them are listening to women's rights and medical evidence, but it did not really sink in. Somali young women, I have not seen many of them assessing female circumcision as a criminal act against themselves or their fellows. They might say so, but they don't react with the same rage and crudity as a foreigner would. So there is change in the sense that they might not do it to their children, but they don't feel resentful, extremely bitter or handicapped, or even emotionally, as you like or one would expect. I do not find them complaining, 'oh I am in this situation, or I have this problem because I have been circumcised...'. (38)

Heema's point of view is interesting because she is saying that it is not such a big deal for many women because it has been going on for generations. The women do not see themselves as victims of a barbaric practice, which is the way many foreigners react to female circumcision. The campaigns to eradicate it are making an impact on the generation of Somalis born in Britain. However, many circumcised young women are having sexual relationships because they can access contraception and health care. There is a feeling for natural justice around the right to control one's own sexuality if not one's anatomy.

A British born participant, Alia talks about the behaviour of Somali women brought up in Britain.

Many girls who are brought up here expect all the freedoms that English girls have as well, like going out. When they go to the extreme like going out all the time partying, they get themselves pregnant basically. I know quite a couple of girls who have got kids now and are single mothers. The parents obviously will kick them out of the house, Somali parents won't take it, they will kick them out. This could be a big factor in family break down. Somali refugees that have come over go to the extremes straight away they just go out partying all the time, they don't want to do any education, work or anything. They just want to get a dole cheque or get a grant cheque. Just laze around and just party all the time, that's what I think anyway.(2)

Somali women's experience of the National Health Service is normally through pregnancy and childbirth and visits to the doctor's surgery. There are many women who are experiencing mental health problems such as depression due to the loneliness and isolation. These women are sent to counsellors and psychiatrists who may not understand their culture.

Case 7b

A counselling service was set up for Somalis in a London hospital. A trained Somali female counsellor was employed to provide counselling in the Somali language. She did not get any clients despite the publicity and information campaigns to attract clients. The service was forced to close down because Somalis do not trust counsellors and the concept of counselling is alien to their culture. They prefer to speak to their friends about their problems.

Farah describes one woman's experience with a psychiatrist.

There are Somali women who it is said when they come here they encounter mental health problems due to isolation and living alone. This is because they were used to living with their families, mother, father, brothers, sisters and relatives... Some women have suffered skin diseases due to the changes they encountered here, as there are people whose skin undergoes changes due to stress with light and dark patches. The doctors when they investigate they say it is due to depression.

The hospital sent the woman to a psychiatrist who told her he would listen to her problem for one hour. She should feel free to cry, talk or even insult anyone for that time. What would that do for her? It would be better if she just cried. She thought they were messing her around. He said he would observe her for one hour. However, eventually she thought it might help her, so she said she missed Somalia and that she wanted her mother and her people. The doctor was sympathetic and no one ever thought they would end up as refugees, and that her problems were due to the civil war. He also said that he was sorry to hear about her problems in this country.

There are different cultural approaches to medical problems among Somalis and Muslims.

7.5 Access to Information

Access to information can make a difference in the quality of a woman's life. It can also lead to paid employment and access to state benefits like family credit, which is paid to low income working families. The low literacy levels of most Somali women meant that they have to access information through friends and family because they cannot read it themselves. This could lead to many families missing out on their entitlements. However, despite language and literacy difficulties many women are seeking out information and they are learning how to acquire functional literacy skills. Information for Somali women on legal status and welfare rights is produced in the Somali language in London, but most women are illiterate so they are unable to read it. The low literacy rates of Somalis even in the mother tongue language means that the use of advocates and interpreters are necessary. Most Somali women's time is taken up with seeking information on how to apply for family reunion, housing, social security benefits etc. There is a lack of information on the needs of asylum seekers and refugees among the general population at large and even among medical staff and others who provide services for refugees.

Farah describes the problems Somali women asylum seekers and refugees experience in Britain due to lack of information on the origins and the needs of this vulnerable group in society.

A neighbour of mine had these problems and the doctors knew of these problems. When she went to the hospital she fainted and she had a little girl with her. After about one hour when she woke up, she asked for her daughter, the hospital workers said that she did not have a child with her. After a while the girl was found playing alone in one area. If the child had been abducted no one would have been aware of it.

People attach negative stereotypes to refugees. When people hear that you are a refugee they think that you have always been like that. They don't think what your status was before you became a refugee. They think you are like a beggar, with a hand stretched out and you don't deserve any respect. I have become hardened by the difficult circumstances and other experiences that I have encountered, and this has changed me physically and mentally.(15)

Access to information is important for Somali women to find out about their legal status and

legal rights. The participants wanted the government to provide accurate information and statistics on refugees to the media and to the public. But it may not suit some politicians to do this. The welfare status of the participants were as follows: all the women were on income support and family credit except three who were in full-time and part-time paid employment. Legal status is another factor, which influences adjustment. Refugees, who have been resettled from abroad legally, generally enjoy the same rights as residents, whereas asylum seekers remain in a more vulnerable position while they await the outcome of their case. In many cases asylum seekers are denied access to social security benefits and many are not allowed to work (Forbes Martin, 1992). Refugees (such as the Vietnamese) who are part of the quota system and are brought to Britain by the government as part of an international resettlement programme, do not experience many of the problems faced by other asylum seekers. They do not have to wait to hear about the asylum claim decision, to know if they will be allowed to stay. They do not suffer associated psychological insecurity, nor do they lack organised housing advice and other assistance (Carey-Wood et al, 1995).

7.6 Conclusion

The evidence reviewed in this chapter demonstrates how Somali women's legal status in Britain has changed the dynamics of gender relations within the family. However, it was also women's awareness of their religious and cultural obligations which might limit their desire to pursue their life options against their husband's/family's wishes.

The creation of more female-headed, single-carer families has been a direct result of the Somali civil war and the family reunion policies enshrined in British immigration law. This situation has enabled women to become more assertive and to make decisions in the household. Women's access to income support, housing benefit and child benefit provided by the state has given them some financial independence. The legal freedom while implied was not always operational because of diverse structural inequalities and racism embedded in social welfare policies. These inequalities are also implied in the application of concepts like Black cultural pathology and the lack of research on Black women's issues in feminist research.

Somali women have come into contact with the police mostly as victims of crime and domestic violence and when their relatives have been arrested by the police and convicted of crimes. Women with low education levels, on low incomes and dependant on state benefits were more likely to have contact with the police, the social services and the immigration service. Most participants started their housing experience in poor conditions in Bed and Breakfast type accommodation and temporary housing. The overwhelming majority of participants still lived in some form of rented social housing. Racial harassment was a common experience of the participants.

Somali women have difficulties accessing the health services due to language barriers and the need to be seen by female medical doctors. They also experience stereotyping and racism from health staff due to cultural differences. Most health staff did not know how to handle cases of Female Genital Cutting during pregnancy and childbirth. Women also experienced mental health problems due to isolation and living alone. Somali women needed access to good quality information about their entitlements to services through advocates and interpreters because many cannot read and write in English or their mother tongue language. Many women do not know what social security benefits they are entitled to and this can affect their income levels. Relatives of Somali asylum seekers who fell foul of the Asylum and Immigration Act rule (on not allowing state benefits to people who did not apply for asylum at the port of entry) had to support them financially. This resulted in overcrowded homes and families already living in poverty on extremely low incomes having to provide support to destitute relatives and clan members.

It is important not to lose sight of the major role Somali culture plays in this debate on women's freedom. While legal status may imply certain measures of freedom, the ability to exercise these options is constrained by culture and religion.

Chapter 8

THE LABOUR MARKET AND INCOME

In this chapter I will examine Somali women's experience of the labour market and how changes in gender relations are affected by a woman's access to an income. The majority of the participants were not employed. This might seem a result of sampling, but in fact it accords with my general knowledge of the Somali community. Therefore few had direct experience of the labour market. The home is where they spent most of their time. The stable hierarchy produced by marriage is also due to the holistic nature of this particular institution. Marriage controls a married woman's life and the degree to which this happens can vary according to social class and subculture. There are also instances in research, which show husbands controlling their wives' access to work, education, seeing certain friends and working outside (Delphy and Leonard, 1992). The issue of time is also important because it would be difficult for a woman to go anywhere or to undertake paid employment if she is responsible for all the household tasks.

African Caribbean women's employment history in Britain started in slavery and colonisation four hundred years ago, and has continued during neo-colonialism since the Second World War. Many Black women from the Caribbean arrived in Britain alone to fill semi-skilled and unskilled jobs in factories, sweatshops, hospitals, and in the service sector after the Second World War in the mid-1950s. Many South Asian women came in as wives of men economic migrants. Although some women came to join husbands, many came on their own to seek employment. They filled the jobs white people did not want and they faced racism and discrimination. With rising unemployment Black women are currently suffering higher unemployment rates than white people. Somali women's experience in the labour market, income, culture and employment, is obviously different since most came into a different labour market and suddenly, as refugees.

In the 1970s Black women created co-operatives in catering, childcare, hairdressing and toy making where they created their own job opportunities to try to counter the odds stacked against them in the formal economy (Bryan et al, 1985).

The profile of Asian women in the labour market compiled by Bhachu (1993) shows that contrary to the stereotype, they participated actively in the British economy. African Caribbean and non-Muslim women including Sikh women had higher rates of labour market participation in the late 1980s and 1990s, than economically active white women did. The important point about Asian women's labour market profile was that it was predominantly working class. Contrary to the construction of Asian women as 'passive, docile, conflicted and dominated by oppressive traditions and men', their economic activity has enabled them to engage in cultural, social and economic reproduction. For example, Asian women's economic independence has enabled them to contribute to their own dowries and to become central figures in gift exchanges during weddings.

There are serious degrees of racist segregation of the British labour markets (Ramdin, 1987). This is characterised by the fact that Black and ethnic minority women, who are skilled and experienced, are twice as likely to be unemployed and work longer hours in poorer conditions for lower pay than white women. Ethnic minority and Asian women are ghettoised in the home working and clothing industries with the reasons of language barriers and lack of skills (Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995). There is no doubt that employers take advantage of these racist and gendered ideologies within ethnic groups.

8.1 The Labour Market

In this section I aim to consider Somali women's views and experiences of labour market participation and the effects on gender relations.

English Language fluency and immigration status affects the labour market participation of all refugees in Britain. In a study by Bloch (1999) in the London Borough of Newham among Zaireans, Tamils from Sri Lanka and Somali refugees, Somali women had the most difficulty communicating in English. Most of the Somali women were lone parents and they were isolated due to the language difficulties. Cultural and religious barriers also contributed to their isolation and inability to participate in English classes and social and cultural activities. English language skills enable refugees to make contact with the host society

either through employment or socially. People with refugee status and exceptional leave to remain were more likely to be employed than asylum seekers with temporary admission. There has been a shift in the activities of refugees in Britain. There is an increase in the numbers unemployed and a decrease in the numbers working and studying. Refugees undertook mostly unskilled and low paid work with poor terms and conditions. These jobs included for men security work, and for women cleaning, shop and cashier work with most refugees working unsociable hours with regular weekend and night work. Nationally refugees have the highest underemployment (Bloch, 1999).

The high unemployment rates among Somali men, and the high dependence on income support, meant that for many women employment was a necessity if they wanted a reasonable income and not a choice. In fact 98 per cent of participants agreed that women should work. There were views among participants that paid employment should be used to increase the family income and to help the men maintain the family. There were also some views that women needed to be economically independent of their husbands. Women's access to economic independence was also possible through income support and other state benefits because many Somali women are lone parents, separated or they have independent legal status in Britain. An issue that prevents women from accessing the labour market is a lack of information about their legal rights and their interpretation of Islamic law.

Roon is keen for women to work to achieve economic independence. She also disagrees with Somali men's feeling of superiority to women.

It is good that they (women) work and that they can help themselves. As you cannot depend on a man, even a Somali, to give you what you need. You can send money to your family, you can buy what you want, or save. It is good for both partners to work. In my understanding we are equal. I have not seen any men who are better than me. But they say that men and women are not equal, as the man is worth 100 and the women 50. You are a woman and women are meant to stay at home and have children. The men feel they are superior, but I don't agree. Whatever a man can do I can do, I work and send money to my family and I can take care of myself. In my opinion men are not better than me. (12)

Many Somali women are working and sending money home to their relatives in Somalia. The refugee situation and the men's absent or low incomes have sent many women into the labour market. There has been a change in Roon's perceptions of her abilities. She now sees herself as an autonomous individual.

Somalis face barriers when applying for jobs because they do not have the requisite information, skills, knowledge and experience. Conversely Samiya feels that this is a form of indirect discrimination. They are unable to gain the required experience because they are not being offered suitable work.

Another thing is the high rate of unemployment. Back home when you are educated you can work and you are all right financially. Here they sometimes require you to have experience in this country, so you cannot work. The person is unable to find work. They do not say you are not eligible but it is more indirect discrimination. (39)

The other issue is that women should work so they can become informed about current affairs. They can only work providing they are able to find childcare. However according to Khadija they need to have the information to do that.

...Why should only men be able to work? I don't want to see that this work is for the men. If a woman has the time and someone to help look after her children, she can go to work. She should work and have something to occupy herself with apart from the children, her husband and her home. She should be informed about what is going on in the world. (11)

As a newly arrived refugee community, Somali women did not have home working as an option to fall back on or family businesses unlike Cypriot and South Asian women.

Khadija described how Somali women were moving from a model of not working outside the home, to entering the labour market to earn an income and to broaden their horizons both mentally and socially. The reality was that women are entering the labour market out of necessity. The women in white-collar office jobs and the women in manual work have different experiences of the labour market. The women in skilled employed may be broadening their horizons more than the women doing manual labour like cleaning which is physically demanding. But in either case, work involves leaving the home and contact with non-kin.

Access to paid employment that can bring about economic independence was ostensibly only available to participants who informed me of their employed status. In the study there were only 7 participants who listed their occupation as employed and 43 as unemployed. The unemployed participants were housewives and students. The previous occupations in

Somalia of women employed in the UK were teacher, nurse, secretary, and assistant lecturer. Their UK occupations, which provided them with the highest incomes among the participants, were nurse, sales assistant, interpreter, community worker and teacher. Many women, who had skilled jobs in Somalia, were unable to find equivalent work in Britain because of non-recognition of qualifications, lack of UK work experience and language barriers. One of the interview questions was whether women were working or not. Those who had white-collar jobs such as community workers, teachers, interpreters and advocates responded that they worked. Only 14 per cent of participants said they were employed in white-collar public sector jobs. There were Somali women who worked as traders and businesswomen. They travelled to the Middle East and Europe to purchase jewellery and clothes, which they sold door-to-door to Somali women. None of the participants revealed they did this kind of work. They regarded paid work as being office or factory work. The women who had very low levels of education responded that they did not work and they were on income support.

Employment is used as a lever for autonomy and self-determination. Some women who have access to paid work are requesting divorces because they believe they can start their lives over again. Filsan believes women who are not happy in their marriages should separate from their husbands and start again. In her case she was separated from her husband due to the war and his inability to get a visa to join her in Britain.

The women whose husbands are away? They look after the home until they meet again. If this is not possible then it is better to separate, and the woman can marry another man. Because you see our life is very short as a woman, I am 35, and what is remaining for me? If we don't get back together again, I am going to lose a part of my life. Now it is three years. (9)

Question: So would you request a divorce?

Yes, then you go out marry another man, get an education, look for employment, have one or two more children. This is what is missing from most Somali marriages. The men feel that if they marry you, they have to enjoy and not the wife. I feel that if you are not both happy in the marriage, then separate and look for and marry another partner.

In my case when my husband wanted to come to join me he couldn't because his passport was stamped with 'no'. I do not have a travel document so I could not go to him. The war played a part in our separation. But with the other couples that are separated, the man can marry up to four women. And if you are here waiting for him, I don't agree with that. You have to go out and be brave. You are a human being,

you need to have someone to share your life with you, as he has. So why are you waiting for him? It is wrong. I do not agree with that. She has to go out. (9)

Filsan has a pragmatic approach to marriage. Women are entitled to be happy in their marriage just like the men. Filsan is very clear that life has to go on. She is educated to higher education level and employed. I met up with Filsan a few years after this interview and she was divorced and remarried. Paid employment and access to a regular income (e.g. social security) often help a woman to decide to move on in her life and to file for divorce. She is also conscious of her biological clock ticking away because she would like to have more children before it is too late. Many other women who are unemployed feel too bound by the noose of culture and religion to request a divorce. I came across the views that some men left behind in Somalia often marry a new wife but most women wait for their husbands in Britain. Access to the labour market provides an incentive for some women to make changes in their lives.

Educated women in Somalia who worked, usually gave up their job once they got married. Women's paid work was not regarded as important because it was considered that working at home had a higher priority. Nura has changed her mind about women giving up work after marriage.

I have changed about the family positions. Before, back home, we believed that women should be staying at home, working at home. Even if she gets an education, as soon as she gets married she will no longer be able to carry on, even if she has a job and everything, once she gets married. (40)

Nura believes that women should continue working after marriage. She has changed her mind about family traditions. There are issues for women around working outside the home where they may have to mix with other men. This is not a desirable practice for Somali women due to cultural and religious reasons. But these can be overcome for financial reasons. Male unemployment in migrant communities also leads men to want to control their women's sexual freedom more closely (Kudat, 1982).

Women's access to the labour market is reduced due to their domestic duties. Women are also less likely to find paid work than men due to sexual discrimination and women's responsibility for domestic work that keeps them confined to the house. Filsan stated,

The other thing is even the job opportunity, it is the men who always get the job. It

is very rare for the women to get a job. Because of the society they think that you are a woman, you have to stay at home, you have to cook. It is not easy for women to look for a job. So they are not equal if you look at that. (9)

Educated women have more access to skilled higher paying jobs than uneducated women. There are women who have access to income from businesses. There are self-employed businesswomen and traders selling gold, clothes and jewellery. The next section considers Somali women's incomes.

8.2 Income

Gender inequality is part of the structure of the family. As discussed above families have internal structures based on gender and generation with heads (usually adult men) that allocate work and make decisions on consumption. Other studies of the UK show the wife does not control income produced by the husband. Wives control income within areas where responsibility has been delegated to them. Some husbands/fathers have the power to request a child to stop formal education to work for the family, to be trained in a certain occupation and whether to allow a wife to work or not (Delphy and Leonard, 1992). The reality of life now is that two incomes are needed to maintain a household and many women do work outside the home. Dependants such as wives or adolescents who have access to their own income have increased bargaining power within the family. However, childcare costs and any household work, which is bought-in, are paid out of the wife's income if she is employed. The wife's income is substantially reduced by these deductions that leave her with very little net income. This means that while financially it may not be worthwhile for her to work there are clearly other benefits, which are discussed in this chapter. The woman's income is mostly spent on the family. In most Somali homes any childcare costs would generally be borne by the woman because that is her area of responsibility.

The participants' main source of income was from the social security payments (e.g. income support and child benefit) they received weekly from the government. The few who worked received their salaries. The unskilled cleaners and hotel workers earned between £3-4.00 per hour. The skilled workers were hourly paid translators earning between £10-15 per hour and others earned between £15-20,000 per annum working for full-time or part-time for community associations. Many women also received payments every six months from their

financial savings group (hagbad) that they contributed to weekly. This sum (that could be up to one thousand pounds) could be spent on remittances to Somalia, gold jewellery (for investment purposes) and furniture and decorations for the home. Somali husbands usually give their wives gold as a wedding gift and women purchase more gold themselves during the marriage. Gold can be sold if the woman needs money at any time during her lifetime. The women's weekly income was spent on food, children's clothing, transport, household appliances, utilities and other bills. Some women have managed to rebuild their family homes that were destroyed during the war in Somalia from their UK savings and with contributions from other relatives living abroad. The majority of men were unemployed and they also received social security payments, some of which would be given to their wives and some they would spend on themselves for khat, cigarettes and clothing. Generally women's income was spent on the home and children and men's was spent more on themselves.

I was also informed that many Somali women on income support were employed part-time in casual cleaning and factory paid work. The information about unskilled work was something I came across through informal discussions with participants. It was through my involvement in the Somali community that I was informed about the casual working later on. The factory work they did was usually in the clothing industry where they worked in sweatshop like conditions for cash in hand, at very low hourly rates of between £3-4 per hour. The women worked for up to 10 hours a day, with no paid lunch breaks, with very poor conditions of service, no job security and no sick or holiday pay. That meant that most women only worked in certain places for short periods because of the fears of raids. Employers were able to use this insecurity to withhold wages on the grounds of using it as a deposit in case of any damage to the employers' property. African and Asian workers were targeted during random raids by police, social security and immigration officers searching for illegal immigrants on employers' premises such as hotels, factories, and offices. As a result of these raids many employers carried out their own passport checks on employees (Gordon, 1985). This has since been reinforced by legislation placing the onus on employers to check if job applicants require a work permit. The effect of these practices has been to drive Somali women deeper into the unregulated world of cash-in-hand, short-term unskilled manual work.

Participants identified the need for women to work so they could have an independent income. Madina recognises the earning potential of work will increase the family's income.

Yes, if they (women) sit at home they will not be making any income. If they work they can help their children and families, it is good to work. (1)

Fardosa identifies the need for economic independence from husbands as an important reason for a woman to work.

Yes, because you will not be dependent on anyone. It is part of Somali culture for the woman to stay at home and for the man to go out to work. If he gives you some amount of money it will not be enough. When you work you will have your own money to do what you want to, therefore it is good for women to work. (35)

The majority of participants accepted the need for women to participate in paid employment. Heema was very clear about the importance of women's employment for independence, self-actualisation and self-fulfillment reasons.

Oh, any reasons? Any reason anyone in the world should work. To earn their living, to be independent, to be, apart from anyone else as individuals. (37)

As mentioned above Somali women were expected to stay at home with the children in Somali culture. So the idea of financial independence is new. However, when the husband is unemployed there is little money coming into the household. So whatever the husband provides will not be enough.

The recognition of the need to work cut across all age groups and educational levels. Leyla describes her attitude to both paid and unpaid work.

Yes, women should work. We should help ourselves. We should help each other with the housework. One person working in a household will not be sufficient. If the man and the woman are working it will mean a higher income. (5)

Women were very clear about the importance of paid employment and this is also linked to changes in the man's role in the household. Women who engaged in paid work and contributed to the family income did not necessarily improve their share of household power. They still had to perform their household duties in addition to working outside the home. A woman bringing in a wage was generally regarded as 'helping' her husband. The added incentive about feeling independent was also recognised.

Question: Do you think women should work?

Yes, as she can help her husband with financial expenses. She will feel more independent. (48)

There are two reasons given for women to work. One is for her contribution to the family income and the other is for her own independence. The two reasons are not mutually exclusive.

Most participants' attitudes to both education and work were positive. Farida's response describes the functional benefits of education and work.

If a woman is educated she will not need an interpreter, or her husband to follow her around everywhere. It is good for a woman to be educated, she will be able to go to the GP without an interpreter and she will understand how to give her children any medication, which is prescribed for them. The family income will be increased if the man and woman work, as 90% of Muslim women in Europe don't work. Education will bring independence and self-confidence. (38)

Many women are also requesting a divorce because their unemployed husbands spend all their money on the drug khat. An unemployed low-income family will be severely affected if a man purchased khat on a daily basis according to Alia a British born participant.

Marriage breakdown is caused by khat I reckon. Large numbers in the community are eating khat these days. The husbands, instead of buying food for the family they might just go out and buy two lots of khat each day, which costs about £10. They won't be feeding their children, the wife will obviously get upset and a lot of family breakdowns are caused by this drug. It has really broken down the community as well. (2)

Using khat on a regular basis can also affect mental and physical health.

There are also some small-scale Somali restaurants, hotels, telephone call centres and shops springing up in London Boroughs where Somalis live. Many small-scale ethnic minority clothing factory employers were not paying national insurance contributions for the workers who were classified as 'self-employed'. They were in effect being denied the benefits of employed status such as sickness benefit or holiday pay. They did not exercise any control over their work such as the amount of work, hours worked, how the work was completed and what happened to the finished product. Somali women who are educated and who speak English tended to get legal, skilled employment. However, the majority do unskilled work. Now because of the tightening of government regulations and work permit checks most people on income support are unable to find casual work.

Hibo stated,

There are some women who work, although they do unskilled work like cleaning. Most of them do unskilled work, like chambermaid work in the Hilton. There are others who are not married but are educated and these ones work too. The Somali women who come from Kenya are educated and they get good work straight away. They understand the language. (44)

Migrant women workers suffered health and safety hazards from working at home or in small factories often as unregistered workers. Without recourse to the protection offered by health and safety regulations, fires and injuries to women have occurred resulting from poor conditions of work. The numbers of migrant women working in the unofficial economy is under-reported and for every known worker there are several unknown ones (Mitter, 1986). The next section will look at culture and employment.

8.3 Culture and Employment

Most participants believed that a Muslim woman's prime responsibility is to her family as a wife, mother and daughter, and a woman should not forget her religion. However, in my study there did not appear to be any conflict between women engaging in paid employment and contravention of their religious beliefs.

The fears of Muslim parents around the influence of western culture and the dilution of their own culture on their children are very real. Other work on second and third generation Muslim young women in Britain shows them negotiating a tight rope. Some women can operate comfortably in both cultures. Other women make a stand for one and reject the other. At the end of the day identity is a personal, subjective and complex matter, which cannot be neatly packaged and prescribed.

There are cultural and gender issues which affect the type of jobs which Somali men and women do. Whereas women work in hotels, catering and in cleaning the men will generally not accept to do such manual, unskilled work. I found this has caused disagreements between men and women in this study because the income support money is not enough to support the family. The men cannot find skilled work or 'men's' work to supplement the family income. High levels of male unemployment meant that many

migrant women with young children worked in unskilled, low paid, manual work in hotels and factories to make ends meet as outlined in the previous section.

Hibo, describes this situation.

In Somalia the men did not sweep floors, or clean, culturally it was unbecoming for a man to sweep the floor, but here it is normal, there is nothing bad about it. Back home the men would become businessmen, or open a shop, but here the men feel it is beneath them to mop floors in Macdonald's. He would not be caught dead doing that sort of work. This is the cause of disagreements between men and women. The man will not agree to make beds in hotels so the woman will tell him to go and look for work. Then he will say he cannot find work and she should leave him alone. Then the woman will say, "if you are not looking for work, then get out"...These women who are used to a comfortable lifestyle want money. It is possible that they want to maintain their previous lifestyle and the money from the income support book is too small. So they tell the men to go and look for work, and the men say, "where is the work?" The women say, "at the hotels", and the men refuse. This is the cause of their disagreements. (44)

From Hibo's comments above it appears that men see women's work and men's work as more distinct than women do. Most men also refuse to do housework and childcare because they see that as women's work performed by low status people. The women used to have a lot of support from other women in the extended family back home but in Britain this is not the case. The issue of work being linked to autonomy and gender relations is very important. When women undertake paid employment they become more independent and that can affect the gender dynamics between husband and wife.

According to some participants a woman's place is in the home, and for this reason she cannot have equality with men because of discrimination and she has less opportunity to go outside the home. Hawo believes that women should stay at home with the children.

I like to see women always respecting their traditional and religious roles. In our culture men are the breadwinners...work hard and look after the children. If the women do not have work to do, they stay at home and look after the children, which does not mean they have equal rights, you know. (34)

Hawo believes that a woman should give up her job if her husband is financially capable of taking care of the family. Hawo does not believe in gender equality in terms of work and traditional gender roles. There are many women like Hawo who do not want to work, if they can avoid it.

Suad made an interesting connection between work and freedom of movement. She believes that if a man is financially able to maintain his family then there is no need for a woman to go outside the home. She justifies her response by referring to Islam.

No, if he says to me don't go to this place, then I will not go. There are two sides to this going out. If he has a good job and we have a house and whatever I need, then Islam says that the woman should not go outside. However, if we do not have enough in the house then Islam stipulates that both of you can go out to earn your livelihood. Like you would to work in an office, work on the farm or herd the goats. (43)

Women do not have freedom of movement in Suad's opinion. If her husband says she should not go out then she would not go to a place. She will only work if the family's income is low. The majority of participants adopted Suad's attitude, which contrasts with the feminist idea of a woman's need to earn an income for financial independence. Religious beliefs can affect labour market access.

Suad's response contrasts with Khadeer's who believes that she should be independent and have freedom of movement. She states:

Because I have my own mind and my attitudes, because I don't want to take any advice from anyone. (23)

The differences in these two participants' views could be linked not only to Suad being married and Khadeer divorced but also to differences in education levels and religious beliefs. Both participants are over 50 but Suad does not have any formal education but Khadeer is a university graduate. Doubtless these elements all interact – one can be divorced and assert one's views if one has a job because one is educated.

Samiya reported that there are some women who believed that you need your husband's permission to work. These women suffered because of lack of information regarding the interpretation of religious information.

They will accept whatever they hear from someone who does not know about real Islam, they assume that you cannot go outside without your man, you cannot work without permission of your man. In Somalia, these women were not so fanatical. (39)

These women can be construed as making patriarchal bargains with their husbands in London (see chapter 2, 2.5.1). In order to maintain the status quo and respect that existed in Somalia

they asked their husband's permission before they went out and before taking up employment. They did not want to be seen as wives who disobeyed their husbands. It is also a way of showing deference to their husbands, avoiding arguments and of staying married. Migration to Britain has increased these women's devotion to cultural and religious traditions and to their marriages (see chapter 6).

Mariam takes supports women's employment provided a woman has adequate childcare.

If she has someone to look after the children and she has the knowledge to work then she should work, to be able to save and have money. (3)

Women have to be the ones to look for the childminder. Women should also work to help their children. They will get information that will help with their children's welfare.

Access to information can increase a woman's self-confidence and independence to help her quality of life. Hibo believes functional literacy and learning one's way around the system can lead to paid employment if one understands English. Although she does things for her children.

But here, I realised things were not easy, I have learnt how to shop and to use the money. How to pay the gas bill, how to manage the money I get and the children's needs. If I can get a good job I will take it if I understand the language. Or on the other hand I will take whatever I get. As today I do not have a man with me and I have small children. I will work to help my children. If it is an office, or about their school uniform, there are many things that I may need to know about for the children's welfare so I am not shy about seeking information or help. In Somalia I did not even learn about how to do the shopping, but here I have learnt about all the things I need to know that will help me. If I am told that I can get assistance in a certain place I will then take a bus and go to the address. I will tell them my problems, if it is about an increase in poll tax, if the house needs repairs I will report it. I have learnt how to do many things now, and I am happy about this. Without this knowledge I could not survive here. (44)

By obtaining relevant information Hibo had increased her independence and learnt survival skills. Once her English has improved she may seek paid employment.

Alia believes that women should work to enable them to get out of the house to socialise with other people. There are mental as well as financial reasons for women going out to work instead of staying at home with the children.

Question: Do you think women should work?

Yes I think they should. It is up to the individual, but I think you get more out of life when you work. Not only financially, but mentally as well, interacting with people and learning how to work in a team, going out socialising with your work colleagues and stuff like that. Instead of you staying at home looking after the kids. (2)

The feeling that women should work in order to know what is going on in the world outside the home is another theme in addition to financial gain and helping the husband. Nuur expresses this view.

Yeah, well they should work because they will get more experience from working like men do. Plus she will help her family and she will help the man, her husband in many ways, like money, the future, they can build up a good comfortable future. And they should really work and see what is going on outside. They should, yeah. (13)

The next section explores Muslim women's employment in other societies and communities.

8.4 Employment in other migrant and refugee groups

Lutz's (1994) study of immigrant women in the Netherlands revealed that there are very small proportions of second generation Turkish and Moroccan Muslim women entering higher education and universities. This is in spite of these students having followed the Dutch education system for about twenty years. Most uneducated Turkish and Moroccan women in the Netherlands work in the hidden economy or within family businesses. Their lack of language ability and poor schooling were further barriers towards official labour market success. Also as Muslims their cultural background did not fit in with the demands of employment except within home working.

The key factors affecting the low educational attainment of second generation Muslim young women in the Netherlands were issues of race, gender, social background and culture. The educational background of the mothers, pressure for cultural conformity in terms of early marriage, the need to bring in additional income from employment, and the fear of young women attending a co-educational environment and mixing with the opposite sex are all contributing factors to low educational achievement. Ninety per cent of second generation Turkish and Moroccan women in Lutz's study completed secondary modern school and obtained a diploma which did not have much value. Poorly educated immigrant girls were dropping out of school due to teenage motherhood and ending up on income support. They

also experienced implicit and explicit racism when being refused employment (Lutz, 1994).

My study has revealed the opposite, that Somali women encourage their daughters to do well in their education in order to get a good job. Most Somali mothers do not want their daughters to have early marriages and many children just like they did. In particular, the Somali mothers who had little formal education and who worked in unskilled manual work wanted their daughters to be economically independent. Some daughters taking on board their mothers' motivation took up skilled employment after their further and higher education.

A British born participant, Habiba talks about the encouragement her parents gave her to look for a job.

My parents encouraged me to get a job. Everyone said do something with yourself, so it wasn't like I wanted to do it and they wouldn't let me, there is more freedom. I don't think there is a culture conflict in me as I blend well in both worlds and cultures, because I was born here. At school you have the English, western culture and at home you have the Somali culture, I know both worlds well. I hang round more with Somali friends now than before. (36)

Shaw (1988) maintained that many second-generation Pakistani women in Oxford have pursued 'western careers' while fulfilling their social, financial and marital commitments to their community. They also played a large part in the family and community's social and religious events. For example, the women convened and attended circumcisions, marriages, funerals and dinners. Their careers and education have not resulted in the rejection of these activities within their community. On the contrary, the women justified their career by reference to Islam stating that their critics' interpretation of Islam was narrow. This was similar to Somali women. As long as they fulfilled the religious and cultural requirements they were free to work and pursue their careers.

There is evidence that Muslim women's labour force participation in the Middle East was low even compared to other developing countries (Papps, 1993). However, Papps (1993) found that the World Bank survey results of attitudes to female employment (in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Turkey) were consistent with the existing literature, which finds very little direct effect of Islamic ideology producing hostile attitudes to female employment.

Although it could affect the way women perceived their major role. The lack of satisfactory childcare arrangements was a very important factor affecting women's employment. The women were not constrained by the attitudes of others or their menfolk. The participants in my study also found that the culture was not directly incompatible with women's employment. However, the lack of practical support from men with childcare and domestic work was a major constraint.

Employers of Muslim women were concerned with unsatisfactory levels of women's education and training, and the unreliability of female workers. These affected their attitudes towards recruiting women. Religious objections were an unimportant factor affecting employers' attitudes. The results of the survey (Papps, 1993) were not constructed to give reliable results but the general findings outlined above indicated that religion was not a major factor affecting women's labour force participation. There were few studies, which examined the attitudes of employers in Muslim countries to recruiting women employees. Although there were numerous studies of the attitudes of Muslim women to employment.

8.5 Conclusion

Migration to Britain and women's access to employment and education have resulted in more women having access to their own financial income, mainly through income support or occasionally paid employment. Most participants had positive responses to women engaging in paid employment provided it did not interfere with their childcare responsibilities. The need for women to engage in paid work was regarded as very important for financial as well as reasons of independence and self esteem.

There were religious and cultural reasons that made men the head of the household. Education of women would ensure that they achieved greater equality and access to economic independence. Many women tended to ask their husband's permission to go outside the home and to seek employment out of respect and in deference to his role as head of the household. Men's refusal to perform any household tasks and lack of income often led to marriage breakdowns. This was more likely to occur where the men were unemployed. Women's threshold for tolerance over marital disputes was much reduced because of access

to economic independence. Work was also regarded as a means of helping pay household bills, to increase women's financial independence and to learn what was going on in the outside world.

It is evident that Somali families in Britain were undergoing a silent change in gender relations. Women who had access to education and economic independence were taking control of their lives and were making major decisions that affected the family. They were saving money from their part-time jobs and social security payments to remit to their relatives back in Somalia. This situation had undermined the confidence of their husbands and fathers who were not as enterprising or who felt threatened by the changing dynamics in gender relations.

The men were concerned with maintaining the position which the culture allocated to them, that of provider and breadwinner. If they were unemployed they were not able to bring home the 'bread', the state in the guise of income support did this. They were not able to adjust to their new role of sharing tasks with the wife, because it was against the culture. This was a simplified explanation of the difficulties experienced by families where the household tasks were not shared. Somali women were keen for their daughters to obtain educational qualifications in order to get a good skilled job.

Chapter 9

EDUCATION AND GENDER RELATIONS

This chapter explores the issues underlying Somali women's access to and use of education and training opportunities in Britain. One central focus of this study is the possible connection between education levels and changes in gender relations. My original hypothesis was that increased educational levels would lead to increased autonomy for women. Not only that, the participants attached great importance to education throughout the fieldwork. For example, in response to the question whether women should be educated, 90 per cent of participants agreed - despite the low levels of women's literacy and the low priority given to the education of women and girls in Somalia. However, family responsibilities and religious beliefs are also key factors that affect access to and use of education. In this chapter therefore, a range of educational issues will be examined: participation in education, marital status, culture and education, and access to information, as well as a discussion of other work on gender, race and education (postponed from chapter 2).

The dearth of literature on refugee women, despite the fact that they constitute the majority of the refugee population worldwide (Bhabha and Shutter, 1994) has been noted. The dearth of work on the education of refugee women is even more marked, despite education being a 'human right' and a tool to personal recovery, reorientation and settlement for refugee women in a foreign society where many do not speak the language.

However, even when education is available, refugee women tended to drop courses according to Shawcross (1987). They are faced with practical difficulties of every day life, such as childcare, and also a lack of educational grants and educational guidance, financial difficulties and immigration status. Unsuitable English Language classes rather than specially designed courses are also an issue. Women who do not seek education classes (due to childcare or family responsibilities etc) remain 'invisible' to educational providers despite the potential role of education in helping social and economic establishment in Britain and upon return to the home country.

Although there is little literature, it appears that refugee women generally have lower educational levels than men. Many refugee women suffered gender discrimination in both their home and host education systems (Shawcross, 1987). Restrictive immigration policies can also affect education access. For example, asylum seekers have to fulfil 3 years of UK residency before qualifying for an education grant. Loss of the extended family has affected access to education because women have to cope with housework and childcare by themselves. UK education reform in 1997 abolished student grants and introduced student loans for higher education, which will be another barrier in access to higher education, because most refugees are on low incomes and have families to support.

The classes, which most refugee and migrant women attend, are English classes (Shawcross, 1987) because many women do not speak English when they come to Britain. Some educated women may however have a basic knowledge of English. Literacy levels are low in Somalia so many women are illiterate in their mother tongue as well as in English. These are very immediate problems when Somali women have to adjust to new infrastructures and systems in Britain, where functional literacy is a prerequisite to be able to lead an independent life. (Summerfield, 1993).

There are also health and domestic problems, which prevent women from attending classes. Refugees from war zones have experienced trauma, torture, rape, and beatings and witnessed violent conflicts like murder, massacres, bombings and shelling (Forbes Martin, 1992). Many refugees have left behind family members, children, and aged parents whom they have to support financially and for whom they struggle for reunification. Problems such as mental health, marriage problems, isolation, a feeling of rejection, depression, migraines, disabilities, gynaecological and other medical difficulties result in poor health, and problems with children's behaviour leave many refugee and migrant women exhausted and unable to attend classes (Guyot, 1978). Those who do attend classes may find that their health problems lead to a lack of concentration and irregular attendance.

9.1 Participation in Education

The young people, who know already how to read and write in Somali, they just go to school for six months to learn the language, then they get a job and they're all right.

But older women like us, we just know the domestic things - cleaning and cooking and sewing - so when we go to classes it's harder for us. You need to learn the reading, the writing, the speaking, the listening, everything in one time.

When you grow a plant in your garden, if you look after it every morning, water it, keep it clean, then it will grow straight and healthy. The language is like that - if you start from when you're young, then you can learn it. (Somali Women's Association, 1987:44).

Younger educated women who learn English find it easier to move around in Britain and to access education than older women who have to start learning to read and write from the beginning.

Two thirds of participants had attained higher and further education levels at the time of the research, but the remaining one third had low levels of literacy with 1 in 10 not being able to read or write. The oral nature of Somali society meant that illiteracy was not as great a barrier to movement in Somalia, but it is in the western world.

Among the participants, two thirds have also undertaken some education since arriving. The 32 participants who attended education and training classes had different or multiple reasons for enrolling on the courses: 33 of those who had done courses wanted to learn or improve their English; 27 to improve general skills (i.e. functional literacy, numeracy for shopping, etc); 14 to get on to an access course; 9 to learn about their rights in Britain; 31 to improve employment opportunities; and 6 to start a business. The majority of participants were thus keen to improve their English to have better access to employment opportunities but also for social life generally.

As one participant Leyla explained.

Women should be educated so they can take part in what is happening around them. They should learn to be able to go shopping without having an interpreter. It should be good for women to leave behind ignorance and be educated (5).

Not understanding the language can lead to frustration and not being able to get your basic needs met. This is how a Somali woman called Khadija Farah (Somali Women's Association, 1987:43) described barriers caused by lack of English language fluency.

If you don't understand people, you can't get your rights. You go to the Social Security, nobody listens to you. You go to your doctor, nobody listens to you. Again when we go to shops, we have to ask for what we want, "Can I have two pounds of rice? Can I have flour?" Then, everything is in a tin, in a packet, in a box. You have to know, what is in those boxes, what is in those bottles. You have to know all those names of what you want. And you have to know how much money you have for your shopping. If you collect so many things and you haven't got enough money. Then, you don't know how to catch the transport, the tubes, the buses, which area you want to go. So many things you're going to face, when you don't understand the language.

Samiya believes women should attend education classes so they can improve their knowledge of their entitlements and legal rights.

Yes, women need education. Without education, they cannot contact their local GP's, housing departments, DHSS, and welfare education. That is regarding their children. On the other hand in this country without education, you cannot know what you are entitled to if you are not reading the leaflets, advertisements and immigration laws. As you know we are refugees so there are so many things we are entitled to. So you should go to classes and learn to read. (39)

The different lifestyles in Britain, the currency, the transport system, the health service and the shops are all completely different from Somalia. In relation to this, Shawcross (1987:22) outlines the importance of learning English.

Skills in English language are needed for every social interaction in our community, in work, health care, childcare, shopping, and religious worship and to make any form of educational progress.

The participants need to move out of the home to engage in social interactions. They need to use public transport, to shop, and to attend educational institutions where they can improve their English. This will then enable them to have greater freedom of movement. There is a need for them to be functionally literate to exercise some degree of autonomy.

The lack of literacy and spoken English could also affect access to information on legal rights, although informal women's networks pass on information on welfare rights and

training and education classes. Having access to educational opportunities has been one of the biggest changes in Somali women's lives since their arrival in Britain. Prior to their arrival the majority of participants did not have access to formal education as adults. Their learning opportunities in Somalia were mostly informal occasions through family settings. Even access to religious education was not available for most participants as children and adults in Somalia, but it was available in Britain.

However, one third of participants did **not** attend courses. The reasons given were as follows (the participants selected more than one reason): 24 per cent of non-attendees had no time, 14 per cent had no one to care for the children, 8 per cent said the courses were too far away, 2 per cent were not interested and 2 per cent did not have enough English Language skills. Many still depended on their children, husbands and friends to interpret for them in English. Some of the women who had lived in Britain since the 1970s and had not improved their skills in English, because they had very little contact outside the home with non-Somali speakers.

Given that Somalia is primarily an oral society, the shift in emphasis for many Somali women who were not literate in either their mother tongue or English is phenomenal. They came to live in an industrialised country where knowledge of the written word is important and where functional literacy is essential. On the other hand, most of the participants were bilingual in Somali and English and a few were multilingual: speaking Somali, English, Amharic, Arabic, French, Swahili or Italian, because there are ethnic Somalis who live in Kenya (where Swahili is spoken); in Djibouti (where French is spoken); and Southern Somalia where Italian is spoken in because the Italians colonised that area.

The participants had different entry levels to education and training opportunities in Britain (some attended more than one course). Of the two thirds who went to classes, 48 per cent attended computer courses, 42 per cent attended English Language courses, 32 per cent attended college courses (e.g. BTEC, GNVQ, etc), 10 per cent attended adult education

courses, 20 per cent attended business courses and 12 per cent attended university/degree level courses. The relatively high percentage of participants attending English Language courses reinforces the participants' need for language training. Courses that paid child-support, transport costs and an allowance were the most popular ones.

Table 9.1
Education and Training courses accessed by participants

Education and Training Courses attended	Number
Attended courses	32
Did not attend	18
Total	50

Courses Attended	Number
Computer courses	24
English Language	21
College courses	16
Adult Education courses	5
Business courses	10
University/ Degree courses	6
Total	82

9.2 Benefits of Education

When asked in what way the courses helped them most participants responded that they had developed more confidence, half had learnt to find their way around, a third had moved on to further/advanced education and a third had found a job. In addition, one participant said that she had improved her education, one had learnt to manage stress and to live a healthy life style, and one had learnt about health studies because she planned to be a nurse.

Hibo attended adult education classes and found that she has become more independent.

Previously everything had to be translated for me, but the short time I have been attending the school has helped me immensely. English is the language spoken here, and although I cannot write, but as one picks up the language you learn it, and the school has helped me a lot. (44)

Khadija feels education can give women confidence and the ability to make some choice about their options in life and to deal with oppression.

I think women should have the same education as the men. I want the women to have the same chances as men have and for them to reach the same level. For them to have the same experiences as the men. For women to be able to deal with injustices that affect them. An educated woman is a liberated woman. She will be confident and she will not be afraid of men or anyone. Some women are oppressed by men who order them about, but an educated woman will issue a counter order if a man gives an order. It is for this reason that I want women to be educated. (11)

Nura describes opportunities she has derived from education.

I have got more confidence in myself, either when I am speaking to the people whether it is a man or a woman. It has given me the opportunity to develop myself as a person, to be independent, because when you are living with your family, it is different from when you are living by yourself. You are not waiting for anybody to do anything for you. You have to do it for yourself. It's a very hard thing to start with but at the end you feel you have achieved something about your life. (40)

Table 9.2
Perceived Benefits of Education

Perceived Benefits of Education	Number
Developed more confidence	32
Find my way around	29
Move on to further/higher Education	17
Find a job	19
Improved education	1
Manage stress and lead a healthy live style	1
Learnt about Health Studies to become a nurse	1
Total	100

Those who did attend derived clear instrumental benefits from attending education and training courses i.e. primarily learning survival skills. But another benefit of education was the women’s recognition of themselves as individuals in their own right with feelings and needs as opposed to being someone’s mother or wife.

9.3 Education and Marital Status

In this section I will consider how a woman's marital status (married, divorced and single) affects educational participation. This relates to my initial hypothesis that increased education levels would lead to increased autonomy. Education access issues affect Somali women from all walks of lives and backgrounds, especially married women without education, but a married Muslim woman has several responsibilities and duties including having children, housework and taking care of her husband and family, and this is especially true for Somali women who generally have low levels of literacy. I was interested in finding out what are the main barriers that affect a married Somali woman's access to education and conversely, how education affects Somali women's views on marriage.

The low rate of education participation among Somali women can be attributed to a culture where most women were destined to become wives and mothers from an early age, so formal education was not deemed to be of importance (see chapter 4). However, the fact that 34 per cent of married participants continued their education after marriage demonstrated the importance some married women in Britain attached to education. The average marriage age was between 16-25.

The following case illustrates the practical difficulties of childcare and the traditional view of women's education not being seen as a priority.

Case 9a

Amina (aged 30) lived with her husband, six children under ten and three male relatives (aged 18-35). She had left school in Somalia at 14 and then married at 16 and came to Britain straight after her marriage. She wanted to attend English classes but her husband and male relatives would not look after the children except when she had to fetch the older children from school. She attended English classes for a few months when she got places in the crèche for her smaller children. When she became pregnant with her sixth child she found it too difficult to make the journey to the college with her small children. Her relatives also dropped out of college. Her husband was not against her studying but asked how could she study with all the children and the house to take care of? She felt that if she had the men's opportunity she would study and get a good job. Amina felt that she was unable to ask her husband or men relatives to help with the housework and childcare. It was against her culture and she would be labelled a lazy housewife. Further pregnancies and domestic work made her put her dreams of an education on hold.

Marriage did not in principle preclude a woman from taking part in education and training in Britain but in practice housework and childcare were the main barriers. However, it was mainly for practical, survival purposes to study English, that most married women attended courses rather than for individual purposes e.g. self-actualisation or learning about a hobby.

Farida acknowledges the need for the husband to help with childcare for the woman to be able to attend classes.

Yes, I think both men and women should have equal rights to be educated not only the man. If the women are able to cope with the demands of education and children, and if the man can help out with the children. (38)

The general attitude of men was that housework and childcare were the women’s responsibility.

Table 9.3 Women who had been married’s accounts of their husbands’ attitudes towards their education

Attitude	Number
Supportive	26
Unsupportive	2
Against	2
Indifferent	1
Total	31

The total is more than the number as some participants gave several reasons.

For the married participants, 52 per cent of husbands were “supportive” (encouraging) towards their wives’ education. However, the Somali women students in the English classes I taught were often late or absent due to preparation of meals, shopping, caring for sick children and relatives, attending and helping with weddings, funerals, and other household tasks. The husband’s ‘support’ was not often practical or active. It was more often an attitude that “it is important for you to learn English and to study, but you must find the time yourself”. The insurmountable childcare and other domestic problems often put off women who were keen to participate in education.

Case 9b

One married student with further education level with two young children under six, said she was reluctant to ask her husband for help with childcare, although he was at home sleeping. This was because the answer would invariably be negative and would lead to arguments. If a class did not have a crèche this student would take the children to her mother-in-law's home several bus rides away. It meant getting the children dressed and fed, taking them to the other house and then picking them up. This student found it too much bother for one weekly two-hour class. She enjoyed both the social and academic aspects of the class but the extra bus fare for children aged over five was not worth it. So she stopped coming to the class. This student later had three more children in quick succession and she hardly ever left her high-rise flat because the double buggy would not fit in the lift when it worked.

The lack of suitable childcare provision is thus a substantial barrier to education participation. Even where there was crèche provision, the women had concerns about the crèche workers not being Muslim. They felt uneasy about the kinds of food their children could be given and believed that the workers would not understand Somali culture. But even when the crèche worker in my class was Somali, I still found it difficult to get students in the class to attend on a regular basis. However the fact that 17 married participants continued their education after marriage does demonstrate the importance some married women attached to education in Britain.

Alia a British born participant commented on this idea of women being second class citizens because they were denied an education.

You are treated differently because you are a girl. They think you are not as intelligent as a boy. They give you different rules, you can't do this as boys can do whatever they want basically. It happens in English society and Somali society but more so in Somali society. I feel quite angry when that happens because you get treated like a second class citizen. It is not only my parents but it is all Somalis in general are like that. They see girls as like just to cook and clean. They shouldn't be educated and things like that. Even though my parents have always encouraged me to be educated. But I mean the whole Somali society is run like that. (2)

Nuur argued in favour of education as follows:

Yes, because most of the Somali women are not educated because of our culture. And because most of our men, they think that when more women are educated, they can be very tough or they can tell men what to do or whatever. But that is wrong, because when you are educated, your wife and you will be better off. Because she will be more understanding, more open minded and everything. And she will help you with your work, whatever with everything, with her children. When she has children, she will educate her children, and I think it is a good thing, it is a very good thing. It is

very good to educate a woman. (13)

According to Nuur, Somali men believed that an educated woman might order her husband around. On the other hand, Nuur believed that an educated woman could also be more open minded and enlightened. She would be able to educate her children and help her husband with his work. Nuur has the attitude of women being helpmates to their husbands. Education for women will help the family as well as the woman. Nuur's attitude to education is more communal (to help the family) as opposed to individual (for self-empowerment). This was a common belief of the function of education i.e. educating a woman will improve the quality of the family's life (Smock, 1981).

Khadeer thought women should be allowed to finish their education before getting married. They should also have equal access to education as men.

Why shouldn't they (women) be educated? Women have to be educated as much as men have education. I think women have to finish their education without pushing them to marry to any people. So they should have an education. (23)

Khadeer's approach to education is more of an individual one. She believes a woman should be educated as a basic human right that should precede any marriage. Many factors influenced a woman's decision to get married including age, family circumstances and culture.

However, a husband's lack of practical support meant that, paradoxically, the higher a woman's education levels the least likely she might be to study because she might already speak English. Increased education levels did not necessarily lead to increased autonomy. There is a distinction to be made between women who are educated and uneducated women who have been given knowledge and information about their rights and who use that information to increase their autonomy.

As discussed in chapter 5, many arranged marriages begin to break down because according to Farida the roots of the marriage are weak because their parents chose their husbands for them. But participation in education and training programmes also played a part. It encouraged some women to make changes in their lives and even if it meant separation and divorce.

The culture has changed, women have known that the man cannot just beat them. There are notices telling them that domestic violence is a crime. The men have not changed. They did not say we are now in Europe with a different culture for women. The marriages had no roots as the woman was given in marriage to her husband by her family. The woman had two children, the husband was a businessman and then they came to London as refugees. The woman did not marry him herself, her family chose him for her. Then when the beatings started again she could not accept it. This is how Somali women have changed. (38)

Women learnt from their training and education workshops that domestic violence is a crime and this new knowledge and awareness empowered some to seek a religious divorce. However, this study found that the women who were seeking more autonomy were mostly those with little formal education. Increased formal education did not necessarily lead to increased autonomy. In fact women with further education levels revealed conservative views on separation and divorce in chapter 5. The educated women believed that it was the uneducated women who were taking advantage of their newly found autonomy and leaving their husbands.

It was in fact Somali women without formal education who came to Britain from the Arabian Gulf who were the most likely to request divorces once they acquired functional literacy skills. Samiya describes this situation.

The women who are educated are mostly quite settled here. The one's whom I have been describing are those without much educational background who came to Britain from the Arabian Gulf. Their husband's made them like slaves. The man will say you are my wife, stay in this home I bought for you. I will impregnate you and bring you gold when I want to. I don't want to hear that you are going outside, to weddings etc. Those women have started divorce proceedings here, and they are free. I met them here and I have had discussions with them. (39)

There were also high divorce rates in homes where the husbands have higher education levels but their wives have low educational levels. Nura expands on this theme of divorce among couples with professional husbands.

I am going to connect marriage and relationship breakdown and higher divorce rates. The reasons are: most of the men who come to this country were well educated when they were back home. They had jobs but when they come to this country, but you can see that even the English people they cannot find a job. So what do you expect from a person who comes from another country? They cannot find a job so all they do is get depressed. (40)

There was an element of frustration, which crept into the relationship when a man with higher education was long-term unemployed. He probably ended up chewing khat and getting depressed. These men had higher expectations of their lifestyle from their professional status. Most Somali refugee men who were accountants, doctors, lawyers, engineers and surgeons etc were not prepared to do manual unskilled labour. Non-professional men with lower education levels on the other hand were more likely to have higher retention rates in security and factory work.

Women with lower education levels had increased autonomy and less to lose if the marriage ended. They felt that if they were not being treated correctly in the marriage (e.g. there was domestic violence) it was not the end of the world to end it. Educated women were more concerned to preserve their marriage due to notions of respectability and religious observance.

9.4 Culture and Education

This section examines how culture and religion influence access to education and views on gender equality. In the Islamic religion, all Muslims, male and female, have a duty to seek knowledge. Muslim women and girls should not be denied access to education (Khattab, 1993). Traditionalists in Somalia believed that most women were destined to become wives and mothers and therefore many families did not want to waste their scarce resources investing in female education. This is reflected in the low education levels of more than one third of the Somali women in this study. However, illiteracy is an obstacle to progress in the UK, and most Somali women interviewed realised that they needed to learn to read and write in English to be able to operate independently. But they also felt a spiritual need to learn more about Islam, and when time to attend classes was scarce, the spiritual needs tended to override the instrumental needs, especially among Somali women with no previous education. As a result of migration, religious education became a priority for them.

The students I taught in my English classes made this clear. One woman who had received very little formal education and who wanted to attend the English class told me that since it clashed with her Islamic class she had to go to the Islamic class. Culture thus influenced

access to education by the need to reinforce cultural identity by prioritising access to religious studies. On the basis of my research, I would argue that such religious adherence enables the women to keep sane in a new environment. When others in their community are suffering nervous breakdowns, mental health problems, depression and are suicidal, religious education kept many uneducated women relatively stable.

Women were also very concerned about ensuring their children received instruction in Islam and two other women in my class who were literate in the Somali language, came late to the English class after dropping their children at the Islamic class.

It is difficult to keep the Somali religion and culture alive in this country. But still we try to teach the children and show them the way. The children are losing their culture and religion - they refuse to go to the mosque because their friends don't go...

We are working hard to change the situation. The Somali Community now takes seventy children to the Mosque every Saturday and we will hold mother tongue classes and work hard. (Somali Women's Association, 1987:53).

Children needed to attend Koranic classes so they would not lose either their religion or their culture. Koranic classes include learning how to recite verses from the Koran, praying and learning about Islamic studies, but additional benefits are mixing with other Muslims, learning about dress, diet, and the celebration of Muslim festivals, and about marriage and relationships. Parents are keen to pass on both the Arabic and the Somali languages to their children.

9.4.1 Gender, Equity and Culture

The link between culture and the domestic role of women governs most relationships between Somali men and women. In Britain, more roles are open to women and Somali women are directly exposed to more choices. Giele and Smock (1987) refer to Muslim cultures as one where women's role has been reduced to that of wife and mother because of the increasingly restricted boundaries and role options. However, within the Muslim community itself women's role options are changing because more women are gaining access to education and employment. Women are moving out of the home more, and playing a wider role in their local communities.

This does not necessarily imply a revolution in views of gender equality. However, the women who believed in gender equality among my participants were predominately those with further/higher education levels. In response to the question, ‘Do you think Somali women should be equal to men in the (Somali) society?’, 64 per cent (32) of participants disagreed. However, there were a wide range of educational backgrounds, ages and marital statuses among the 18 who agreed with gender equality.

Table 9.4
Education levels of participants who agreed with gender equality

Education level	Number
Further/ Higher education	12
Primary education	3
No formal education	3
Total	18

The majority of participants disagreed that there should be gender equality in Somali society. This reflects a majority view that many Somali women have to struggle with, irrespective of education and marital status. Women may want to be educated but many feel that their domestic role should take precedence over anything else.

Many participants believed however that women should have access to education to help them understand their religion at a deeper level. If they learn to interpret the meaning of Koranic verses, e.g. those verses that refer to women, they will know where certain religious injunctions come from. Here we should note that to seek education for this end, they will be taught mainly by men and learn a very traditional interpretation of the Koran.

One element that does not preclude women gaining an education in England is the issue of wearing of headscarves and long dresses to ensure the head and legs were covered, even though the wearing of headscarves served as a point of demarcation among the women especially in public places like colleges where men and women mixed freely. The wearing of Islamic dress demonstrated one's commitment to the religion (Koran, Sura 24:30-31). Some believed that if a Muslim woman did not wear the headscarf she was not a good Muslim.

On the other hand, many of the educated participants I interviewed argued that the uneducated women followed Islam blindly, without reflecting on the sayings of the Koran, and that they mixed up religion with culture and traditions giving as examples the practice of female circumcision, polygamy, access to education and dress.

However, within the colleges I observed two groups of women: women in full Islamic dress and others in western dress. All were equally getting an education. In one, the majority who wore western clothes were single students who lived alone or with other young women. There was however peer pressure among the women to wear the headscarf, but I do not think the problem of wearing the headscarf or Islamic dress affected the women's access to education. In colleges I visited in east London there were large numbers of Muslim women students who wore Islamic dress. It could be the Muslim women who did not conform to the Islamic dress code who might have felt out of place in their jeans and tee shirts. Traditionally, married Somali women were expected to cover their heads and legs in public, so Somalis already had a tradition of wearing long dresses whatever their religious outlook. Women therefore attended college in their normal dress, which expressed their identity.

9.5 Women's access to information on their children's and their own education

This section considers access to information on education. Refugee mothers expressed concerns about their children's loss of culture and language and the adoption of a westernised lifestyle. They were also greatly concerned about their children's learning because of their lack of communication with school staff and unfamiliarity with the British education system. Racism and bullying in schools and the local neighbourhood also contributed to a feeling of insecurity, which affected both their children's and their own access to education and training. In addition the low literacy rates of refugee mothers (in their mother tongue and English) meant they were unable to help in their children's education or career advice. They also had to rely upon their children, husbands or relatives for interpreting, which caused them distress.

The majority of participants said they preferred to be given information orally rather than in a written format. This preference for verbal information can affect the way they access and assimilate it. On the other hand, word of mouth is the most effective way to communicate with Somalis through community leaders. It is also an effective way for schools to communicate with the local Somali community especially through a local community organisation. Some schools have indeed employed Somali link workers precisely to work with parents in the school.

According to Fardosa, education has been a harbinger of change in Somali peoples' lives. In Britain, all children must receive an education and Somali families are obliged to send their children to school, which is free.

Yes, there are Somalis who are educated and things are not like before, there are great changes now. People know what education is all about now. Every family is striving to ensure their children and daughters do well. Therefore education will continue.
(35)

Families are now convinced about the importance of education. The women themselves also emphasised 'education' as an opportunity. 90 per cent of participants answered 'yes' to the question, 'Has living in Britain given you any opportunities?' and the key opportunities they mentioned were education (76 per cent); followed by improving/learning English (70 per cent). But only 10 per cent noted the future of their children's education as an opportunity

possibly because the question referred to them. Other individual opportunities that participants felt Britain has provided included widening of perceptions, mixing with people, learning how to cope with life and learning about British culture and the work system. One participant stated how she had learnt about democracy in action after watching the television programme, 'Question Time'. She was surprised that politicians could be questioned in public because she had come from a country ruled by a military dictatorship where that would never happen.

Two-thirds of the participants were attending education and training classes at the time of the fieldwork – probably a disproportionate number due to the sampling frame. Of these, 21 had heard about the courses from a friend, 9 had heard from various forms of publicity, 5 had heard from the Somali Community Centres, 9 had heard from other sources and 6 did not provide any information. That the majority of participants heard about courses from their friends, implies that the friendship and information network among Somali women is strong (at least among those who attend college).

The women who attended courses had well-developed ideas about what they liked and disliked about the format of their classes. I specifically asked questions about the location, course hours, classmates, course content, tutor, crèche and language support in further and adult education institutions and employment training courses. Most liked the location, the course hours, their classmates, the course content, and the tutor. Few however, liked the crèche and the low take up was mostly to do with the staffing (the fears of non-Muslim crèche workers not understanding the culture) and the practicalities of bringing several small children out of the home especially in the cold weather. The women preferred to receive a childcare allowance to be able to find their own childminders.

At the health and welfare rights workshops for Somali women that I attended in Islington, there were between 20-30 women present who came from the local Somali community (see chapter 3). These women received useful information to improve their knowledge and survival strategies. Most women also obtained information and help from friends and relatives on how to claim child benefit and other welfare benefits.

Filsan believes the information from these workshops has empowered women to change their attitudes to some traditions, like female circumcision, about which they had fixed ideas.

And the other thing is that before it was taboo and they don't want to talk about their sex organs. But nowadays they started talking as in group discussions. Talking about their problems, about female circumcision. Before it was very difficult for Somali women to talk about their sexuality.

Question: What has contributed to this change?

The contribution is that many educated Somali women are carrying campaigns to help women on health issues. Organising health sessions for them, so that they will have a chance to discuss on their own health from their own learning. The other thing is that organisations like London Black Women are carrying a campaign about female circumcision. So we asked women as a group to come together and discuss this particular issue. So this is what enables them to have the opportunity to come together and discuss their own health because female circumcision affected their health.(9)

Other studies of migrant Muslim women, have argued that young Muslim women are receiving standards of morality, norms and values through the education system, which are different and contradictory to Islamic values (Afshar, 1994). Also that older women, who are restricted by purdah (seclusion) and not able to access English home tuition, even if it was offered on an individual basis, because their husbands believed the English women tutors would teach their women about liberty and other western permissive ideas (Anwar, 1979). Most Somali women did not suffer from these restrictions. Somali women have had free access to information, which has provided them with the opportunities to improve their knowledge and awareness of their rights in Britain.

Somalis as Muslims are however concerned about women and girls meeting and mixing with strangers. For this reason some women preferred a class for women only, however this was not a major barrier in accessing education. When girls go to school they come into contact with people of other religions and cultures, and Somali parents fear the girls will be exposed to meeting men from outside their religion and culture and may engage in pre-marital sex (there are issues of the social control of young women). But there are benefits from education in terms of qualifications and skilled employment that override this. British born Somalis and single school age Somali women tended to continue their education up to further and higher education in Britain.

Studies of other groups of Muslim women in Europe e.g. Turkish migrants (Kockturk, 1992), which have found a link not only between education and the development of increased self-esteem and qualified job opportunities, but also that an improved educational and occupational status goes alongside increased independence from traditional mores and more ambitious personal plans for the future, do not hold for Somalis, quite the opposite. For Somali women in this study the higher the educational attainment, the closer the woman moved to some traditional mores and customs, as if to demonstrate that her education has not made her 'westernised'. They do have in common however that very few educated Turkish or Somali Muslim urban women participated in organized activities of immigrant groups on an equal footing with men. Women from traditional rural backgrounds did not participate in cultural or political activity where significant numbers of men were present (Kockturk, 1992); and the participation rate of Somali women in even organised women's groups was very low.

9.6 Conclusion

Most participants believed a woman's first preoccupation should be with the home and children because these responsibilities are given to her in Somali culture. Education was regarded as a means of empowerment and independence, as a way out of ignorance, and a means to obtain better paying work. The participants had fears about the negative influence of western culture and values on their children through education, but many women were starting to negotiate changes in their own lives on more equal terms, helped by access to education. Education for young women was definitely a priority for mothers, but although women generally acknowledged the need to improve their own education, it was not a major priority for most. Issues of childcare, language, health and financial problems meant that access to any education was difficult, and Koranic education was more highly prioritised.

Access to education and training is however enabling more and more Somali women to move out from the confines of the home and into the wider world. Functional literacy was a means to enable women to obtain information on their legal rights as asylum seekers. For some women, access to education and information led to increased autonomy, and independence, including divorce, once they knew how to survive in Britain. Functional literacy also

improved the quality of life for many women but lack of fluency in English led to isolation and mental health problems. Time was a problem with women having to undertake domestic work, which meant that they invariably did not have time to attend education and training sessions because of too much housework.

Education has enabled more women to read their religious texts and to interpret the meaning for themselves. Women are supportive of their religion and culture except for some customs, which are oppressive to women. Some argue that these customs actually go against the religion, e.g. denying girls access to education opportunities. Women believed education could give them emancipation and more autonomy. They also believed women should have access to the same educational opportunities as men so as to get a job and to raise the family income.

However, Somali women's increased access to education and training has not had the expected effect on changes in gender relations within Somali culture. A new pattern of household relations has emerged in Britain in the Somali community. There are women without husbands in Britain who have learnt to survive on a functional basis. Their access to information and educational opportunities has enabled them to survive in Britain by learning certain strategies and skills. The skills are how to network within their own community and how to gain access to mainstream advice and information centres such as Citizen's Advice Bureaux, Members of Parliament, forming self-help groups etc.

Married women were the ones most likely to have restricted access to education and training. This is due to domestic work and having to attend to the needs of their husbands and children. Husbands on the whole did not overtly discourage their wives' participation in education and training classes. However, the men did not provide practical help with childcare and domestic work and this meant women did not often have the time or energy to attend classes. And the more educated women were the ones most concerned to hold on to their marriages.

Women tended to obtain information about classes from friends. They preferred to attend

a class that paid a child care allowance, rather than to use the crèche provided because of cultural reasons and ease of access. There is little language support provided in classes. Overall, participants were well informed and satisfied with the location, course content, course hours and their tutor. The participants were clear about the links between educational qualifications and skilled employment. They were also realistic enough to realise that only a very few highly educated Somali women obtained well paid skilled work in Britain.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

In this study I have attempted to demonstrate how education interacts with changes in gender relations caused by migration among Somali women in London. In this chapter I aim to summarise the main findings that emerge from the study.

I was interested in exploring whether Somali women's quest for knowledge had survived their refugee experience. Most Somali women have low literacy rates and Britain provides opportunities for adults to access education. I aimed to examine whether education levels had an effect on women's attitudes and experiences of gender relations.

I was also interested in examining whether living in a western European country would change their attitudes towards their life options, gender equality and women's status. There are second-generation Somali women who were born or raised in Britain. There are also asylum seekers who arrived after 1988 as a result of the Somali civil war. I was initially keen to undertake a comparative study of both generations but this was not practical because of sample numbers and other limitations. However, I did try to include women from different generations in the sample to enable me to have access to a range of views and opinions.

The literature I approached lacked descriptive information on Somali women. In this study I collected a better sample than other researchers. I speak Somali and I was trusted due to my insider/outsider relationship with Somalis.¹ I read widely on relevant material on race, education, migration and religion. It has been useful in setting a context and framework for conducting the research and I hope I have been able to make a useful contribution to it. My interest is as an educator and in education and empowerment, social reproduction, transformation and empowerment.

The literature on gender and education, and feminist theory on the family refer to education as a harbinger of empowerment for women (Shawcross, 1987; Arnot, 1994; Walby, 1997).

¹ I am a Muslim woman from Nigeria married to a Somali. I had religion and ethnicity (Black African) in common with my participants as well as an understanding of the culture and language.

I found Blumberg's (1975) framework for relative status for women useful as a basis for analysing the data on the family and religion and for determining how Somali women define their status. In other words, the life options that are important to them in leading their lives in Britain. Education is one of her main determinants of women's status and this fitted in with my initial focus for the study. The education and training of Somali women refugees is also seen as important by adult education policy makers and practitioners.

The framework for chapters 5 and 6 are based on Blumberg's life options (see chapter 3). I used the following areas from Blumberg's work: marriage, divorce, sexual freedom, freedom of movement, access to educational opportunities and household power. Blumberg's original life options included reproduction and fertility, but I was not able to collect systematic data on those areas. I added the areas of economic development and access to information because they emerged as important themes in the study. I then developed the aims into eight research questions (see chapter 3) and explored the data from the analysis within the chapters based on the State, Work, and Education.

I interviewed 50 women aged from 16 to over 50 with a range of educational backgrounds and marital statuses. The methods I used were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, and in-depth individual and group interviews. I also had information on these 50 individuals, plus many others based on participant observation including access to English Language classes and further education colleges. The oral nature of Somali society made the focus on the in-depth interview one of main instruments of data collection. These interviews were mostly conducted in Somali, taped, and then translated into English.

10.1 Summary of Main Findings

Somali Women wanted to maintain their position in their community. The respect from their peers was more important than any form of mobility that involved breaking the community's moral code and suffering shame and ostracism. Kandiyoti (1991) described Muslim women as bargaining with their husbands to maintain their respect. There were however differences among women by education level in my study.

In situations of marital breakdown, I found it was generally the Somali women with little education who preferred to live alone with their children so they could make decisions and control their budget. Their men were seen as contributing little to the home financially, physically or emotionally. These women were more likely to divorce at will and e.g. see themselves as better off with casual boyfriends (in secret).

Professional women needed to keep their husbands for status. Feminism would suggest that educated women would be the least likely to tolerate men's intransigence with household work, but among Somali migrants, I found the opposite. The bourgeois women were more entrapped by concepts of family, honour, religion and their standing in the community. Such women were especially careful not to have their reputation besmirched by gossip and social ostracism (El-Solh, 1993). A married woman would be divorced if she committed adultery. There are sexual double standards operating between men and women.

Somali women were traditionally under the protection of their fathers' and husbands' clans. These traditional structures have broken down due to the effects of the war. Many women lost their husbands, fathers, brothers and other close male relatives in the Somali civil war or were separated by immigration legislation. Such women became perforce heads of household and took over responsibility for feeding, clothing and bringing up their children and other dependants. Many women also led their families into exile in refugee camps in East Africa and abroad.

It is evident from this study that Somali women's lifestyles have undergone changes as a result of migration and changes in legal status. For example, some women who came to the UK alone with their children have had to wait years for family reunion. This has resulted in single carer families with women taking responsibility for household decisions. Such households are also used strategically even if the husband/father is in England because "unsupported mothers" have independent access to some social security benefits, like child benefit and income support, which provides her with some financial independence. Such women feel empowered to make decisions about marriage, divorce, sexual freedom and freedom of movement due to their legal status.

Independent legal status enables a woman to have more control over her life options. For example, there are women who refuse to enter into arranged marriages. There are others who refuse to succumb to family pressure to get married. Women are able to initiate divorce proceedings because of their independent legal status and economic independence and because their divorces do not go through the British legal system. However, there are other new levels of dependency because many women wait to hear about their asylum claim decision, and are unable to leave Britain because they do not have a travel document or to access various benefits. Many women with secure immigration status are able to gain access to education.

There is evidence that UK legislation prohibiting female circumcision has reduced the levels of the practice in Britain (Kahin, 1997). However, some Somali women themselves do not understand the outrage that this practice arouses in non-Somalis. Some circumcised British born Somali women believe they have a right to control their own sexuality and their own body. Some British born Somali women were also encouraged by their parents to improve themselves through education and to get a job. Most British born women felt at ease in both worlds: at home with Somali culture and outside with western culture. There did not appear to be major culture clashes or conflicts in this group. Culture clashes were more prominent among young women Somali asylum seekers and their families.

The lack of family reunion due to immigration legislation has meant more women are not living in extended family households. This gives the women more autonomy in running their homes but it also increases their isolation and the pressure of domestic work. The presence of relatives in the household could put pressure on women to adhere more to traditional and cultural values. The man will not want to lose face by agreeing to do household tasks that are deemed to be women's tasks like changing babies nappies or cooking. Overall, women have increased their autonomy through access to education and financial independence. Most asylum seekers have financial problems. They find it difficult to open bank accounts. Many Somali women belong to financial co-operatives (hagbad), where they are able to save money and increase their disposable income.

‘Do Somali women feel they have more or less control over whether and whom they marry since coming to Britain?’ It appears that Somali women who were economically independent and educated were more likely to be able to choose whether and whom to marry. However, these women were likely to agree to an arranged marriage if they were still single in their late twenties or early thirties. Some young women without higher education from non-professional families also found their own marriage partners who could be non-Somalis. Marriage to a non-Somali could result in ostracism from the family unless the spouse converts to Islam. Somali women who marry foreigners will experience more disapproval from their families than men. An uneducated woman has fewer options than an uneducated man does. For example, she is more likely to be pressurised in to an arranged marriage or sexually exploited. The family has undergone changes during migration to Britain from an extended family to basically a nuclear family, made up of the parents and children through with transient relatives, and to single parent families. The majority of participants were keen for their daughters to chose their own marriage partners, provided they are Muslim and preferably Somali, although arranged marriages are part of Somali culture.

‘Do Somali women feel they are able to decide when to terminate their marriage?’ Divorce was very common but it was not entered into lightly. Women had no problems filing for divorce if they felt they had a just cause, confirming past research findings (Summerfield, 1993). Participants generally believed and the systematic data collected confirmed, that married women without formal education were the ones initiating divorces when their relationship broke down. Women with formal education tried harder to resolve marital differences. But most Somali women felt empowered to threaten to end their marriage if the husband was not fulfilling his marital obligations. Older married couples aged over fifty were getting divorced as frequently as younger couples. The marriages of women who do not provide emotional support to their depressed and unemployed husbands are more likely to end up in divorce. There were higher divorce rates in homes where the husbands had higher education because of their inability to come to terms with unemployment, a reduced standard of living and the resultant loss of status. Women who refused to comply with cultural requirements to serve their husbands and do all the housework may also end up filing for divorce.

Most Somalis tended to marry and divorce within Islamic law, which is quicker and easier for them than using the UK legal system. They often do not inform state agencies of their Islamic marital status. Women who were not happy in their marriage may also decide to file for divorce in Britain because of their access to a source of financial income, which gives them independence.

Educated women who are separated from their husbands due to the war and immigration problems were keen to get a job and obtain a divorce. Some other women in this situation whose husbands take a second wife may also decide to file for divorce. Sexual double standards operate whereby men in Somalia whose wives are resident in Britain may often marry a second wife. However, participants in this study indicated that most Somali women with absentee husbands do not take boyfriends, but wait for their husbands to join them. There was some pre - and extra- marital sexual activity but it would have to be in secret because of a woman's reputation.

Living in Britain has empowered many women to seek protection from the police against domestic violence. Many women were using threats to call the police as effective deterrents to stop domestic violence. Other women were using religious teachings to guide the relationship between husband and wife. Some women tolerated sexual violence and abuse because of their religious beliefs and in a bid to save the marriage. Divorce is allowed in Islam and women who were not being treated fairly and with respect by their husbands in agreement with Islamic law were requesting divorces.

Many women condemned those women whose behaviour deviated from the modest, obedient woman syndrome expected by the religion. These women believed that the religion made it mandatory for a wife to trust and respect a husband. They also believed that women were not equal to men because of the religious position on gender equality. Men were seen as physically stronger and they were the heads of the household. Women were seen as the main carers of the family. They had to remain strong and implement their religious obligations as wives and mothers no matter what their husbands did. While it was acknowledged that some Somali women were morally and spiritually bankrupt, they were regarded as the exception rather than the rule (El-Solh, 1993). Most women accepted that their religious beliefs did not

stop them from engaging in paid employment if the family needed two incomes. Whereas many educated women were practising their religion and trying to maintain tolerance and patience in the home to avoid divorce.

'Are Somali women able to control their sexual freedom pre- and extra-maritally?' In general, women's extra-marital affairs and dating are not permitted in Somali culture and would have to be conducted in secret. Living in Britain has not resulted in a radical review of Somali women's perceptions of sexual freedom. Cultural and religious values are still deeply engrained regarding the importance of female circumcision, despite the educational campaigns against the practice. Men have more sexual freedom. Women who cross morally accepted boundaries of behaviour face social ostracism and a sullied reputation. As previous work suggests, gossip operates as a strong regulator of behaviour and as an effective means of social control (El-Sohl, 1993). Women tended to adhere to culturally specific forms of behaviour to avoid ostracism by friends and family in Britain and abroad. This is an example of how the types of morality and behaviour of people in the diaspora can be affected and controlled by their home countries' culture.

Religion and culture were traditionally used to control female sexuality. This was through the practice of female circumcision and the teaching of religious education. The awareness that female circumcision was not a religious obligation is spreading. Women still believed it was an effective deterrent to prevent pre-marital sexual intercourse. Many women were afraid to go against their religious practices in public e.g. drinking alcohol, mixing with foreign, non-Muslim men and dressing immodestly. Most women were keen to keep the respect and a good reputation they got by conforming publicly to the behaviour required of Muslim women. Educated women saw women without formal education as demonstrating a blind adherence to Islamic practices without understanding the origin or true meaning of the Koranic verses. They were said not to have the knowledge to read and interpret the meaning of the Koran for themselves. They listened to and followed the meaning given to them by other men and women. However, generally most women identified very closely with their religion.

‘How has migration to Britain affected the share of household power between men and women?’ Migration has produced a shift in women’s attitudes towards men sharing domestic work though not much change in the actual division of labour. Many women were asking their husbands and male relatives to undertake domestic work. But some women with formal education were adamant about not wanting to be seen as adopting westernised behaviour and dominating their husbands. These women were keen to maintain traditional gender divisions in their homes. They stayed at home with the children and the husband did the shopping and tasks outside the homes. More than half of the participants did not believe gender equality existed in Somali society. Many women cited religion for their belief that gender equality was undesirable and wrong. However, other participants believed that gender equality was possible in theory.

Women’s household tasks have actually increased in Britain because they have to deal with legal, housing, social security, education and immigration matters in addition to routine domestic tasks. The women’s share of household power is reduced because they are expected to undertake emotional support and care of family members especially if the husband is unemployed. Domestic violence is also prevalent due to male unemployment and the rise of tensions within households and the use of drugs. On the other hand male unemployment and female employment have reduced men’s power in the household so the situation can be fluid and frustrating. Women have become aware of their emerging power within marriage because of their exposure to western lifestyles in Britain. Some women observed that many couples in Europe work together in the home in partnership.

Poor housing conditions and racial harassment were experiences of many participants. Information was made available to participants through workshops on health and welfare rights organised by the local Somali community groups.

‘What factors affect Somali women’s access to education?’ There were several personal and external barriers preventing many women from participating in education, notably childcare and household work. Families were aware of the importance of education. Participants regarded education as a means of independence and empowerment and as a way out of ignorance. However, many participants had fears about the negative social influences of

western culture and values on their children within the education system. Supplementary religious education was highly sought after by most families, many of whom hired private Koran tutors for their children.

Participants believed that women should complete their education before getting married. They also believed that an educated woman should be allowed to work after marriage in order for her education not to be wasted. It was revealed that some men believed educated women would order them around. Therefore some educated women purposefully adopted deferential behaviour towards their husbands. Women felt that education would make a woman more enlightened and self-aware which would benefit her family. There were no negative views on women's education from participants, which is interesting because of conservative attitudes towards women's education in Somalia.

The education and training classes that paid childcare, transport and attendance allowances were oversubscribed by Somali women from all over London. For the majority of women the financial inducements served as an incentive to attend education and training programmes more than the training content itself. The success of a programme could therefore depend on the resources available to pay allowances to participants. The other success criteria for educational programmes would be if recruitment were undertaken in collaboration with a local Somali community group women's worker. However, despite the overt support for women's education, uneducated women tended to prioritise their attendance at Koranic classes over attendance at English Language classes to fulfil their spiritual needs (and sense of community belonging). Religious education took priority over adult education for many women without formal education. It was to do with maintaining their cultural identity.

Marriage was not a significant factor preventing women's participation in education. Over half the women reported their husbands were supportive of their education. However, most men did not actively relieve their wives from childcare or housework in order to facilitate their access to education.

The demand for women only classes was not a major barrier affecting access to education and training opportunities. This is important for adult education and training policy because local

education authorities are reducing the resources put into women only provision. However, it was not a barrier for most women. They preferred a class where they could mix with other people and learn English. While the participants did not mind attending a mixed gender education class, they preferred to have a non-Somali speaking teacher so they would be forced to practice their English.

‘Do Somali women have access to economic independence and information?’ Women, who have access to forms of economic independence, such as through welfare benefits, have more share of household power because of their disposable income. Women in Muslim societies also obtained household power through their membership of women’s solidarity networks and their role as ‘information brokers’ in the community (Nelson, 1997). This is one way the women have access to information. Their lack of English Language fluency and low literacy levels excluded most women from traditional forms of information access such as the media and literature.

The majority of participants believed women should undertake paid employment to contribute to the family income. This is in marked contrast to the prevailing view in Somalia where men are responsible for the family income. Many women were prevented from entering the labour market because of childcare and domestic work commitments. However, despite these restrictions some women took up unskilled part-time work such as cleaning and factory work.

Somali male unemployment and the resulting low self-esteem also influenced men’s resistance to do household work. Women found it harder to find paid work than men because of their domestic commitments. Some women believed their religion permitted them to work outside the home if the family income was low. The benefits of women participating in paid employment were not only seen as financial but also mental, social, emotional and for life experience.

Some women without formal education who were in arranged marriages (or who were engaged to a man through the arranged marriage process) filed for divorce after settlement in Britain. It is their access to more freedom in Britain and access to financial independence

that enabled them to file for divorce. Women acknowledged the need for functional literacy and survival skills.

Functional literacy and learning English were the key motivational factors in education participation. Women preferred to obtain information orally than in writing. Some younger women (16-25) with uneducated mothers found they had more freedom of movement than women with educated mothers. The participants preferred to attend a course that paid a childminding allowance rather than to bring their children to a creche. Education was clearly linked to economic independence and skilled work. Educated women with children prioritised looking after their children and supplementing their income support money with part-time work. The participants generally valued education and clearly had higher education and career expectations for their daughters.

Most women generally had little or no formal religious education. Many women without formal education actively sought out Koranic education tutors or classes to improve their religious education. Geographical isolation and health problems have made it difficult for Somalis to practice their religion. Religion could affect choice of marriage partner, with most women keen for their daughters to marry Muslims. Younger women (under 40) whose husbands married second wives were more likely to file for divorce than older women (over 50).

10.2 Contributions to Theoretical Debates

One contribution of this study to theoretical debates is an elaboration of how education levels could appear to affect social class and gender relations. Somali women came to Britain from a relatively egalitarian, oral society where education levels did not affect social class. Migration to Britain, which has a literate society, has highlighted the divisions among the women according to levels of literacy. Some women who are educated up to secondary school level looked down on women who did not have formal education, whereas this was not the case in Somalia. The educated women were among the most conservative in terms of religious observance, following traditions and cultures regarding Muslim dress, and obeying husbands etc. This was in contrast to the literature on women's education and

empowerment (Smock, 1981; Kelly and Elliott, 1982). Women's access to educational and information opportunities has enabled them to survive in Britain by learning certain functional literacy strategies and skills. The skills were about how to gain access to mainstream advice centres and information centres and using the local Somali community association for help.

One of the main factors affecting education participation was the financial incentive. Women were more attracted to courses that had a childcare allowance, transport allowance or some other financial payment that was a condition of attendance. Husbands were not the main active barriers to women's education participation though they did not facilitate it either. Apart from the barriers of childcare and domestic chores were also the women's own lack of interest or motivation to attend classes that constituted a personal barrier. This was because although the women acknowledged that education was useful, the egalitarian and oral nature of Somali society did not make women feel their illiteracy was a stigma or barrier to their social standing in their own community.

Newly arrived Somali women did not like to discuss their refugee experience in their adult education classes. The memories were too vivid and painful. Such activities could also affect attendance. Somali women preferred to use crèches which had Muslim crèches workers. There are assumptions in policy literature that women with children will not attend classes without a crèche e.g. (Shawcross, 1987). However, the women in this study preferred to be given childcare allowances to pay for their own childminders. The lack of a crèche did not appear to be a major barrier to learning in this study. Education and training classes linked to work experience, employment or self-employment opportunities were also important to attract the attendance of Somali women.

I used feminist standpoint theory: the premise that knowledge derives from experience, and women's experience produces the knowledge required to challenge oppression (Skeggs, 1997). It is with this approach in mind that I aimed to develop a Black feminist standpoint by researching Muslim women's empowerment. I find their religion was the basis of their empowerment. It provided them with an identity from which some women derived the strength and confidence to challenge their oppressors. Aziz (1997) refers to how

postmodernism allows a feminism of difference in the assertion of identity and the deconstruction of subjectivity. Most of the women identified solidly with their culture and religion as outsiders in a majority Christian country, even those women who disagreed with some aspects of Somali culture. When people are under attack they cling to (and reconstruct) what is familiar. This finding confirmed El Solh's (1993) study, where the majority of Somali women were content with their religious and ethnic identity that separated them from mainstream British society.

Black femininity is gendered and racialised and it is important to consider the multiple oppressions black women experience in Britain. In fact, Somali women have reinvented traditions of dress and behaviour in the face of perceived racism and hostility from indigenous groups. This study has looked at the interplay of gender and empowerment among migrant women. While religion has served to empower some women with little education to seek autonomy, other educated women seek to set up patriarchal bargains to maintain traditional gender hierarchies and their respectability in the Somali community.

Uneducated Somali women's experience of private patriarchy (arranged marriages, dowries, domestic labour and the organisation of domestic finance) was not intense because they have access to economic independence through their social security, membership of financial co-operatives and part-time paid work. The uneducated women experienced more autonomy than the educated women who used their religion to maintain their 'respectability'. Many of the women were registered as single mothers and the tenancy was in their names, although their husbands might live with them. This was influenced by many women coming to Britain first with their children and their husbands joining them later. These factors contributed to Somali woman's autonomy and empowerment.

Muslim women are the guardians of the shame and honour of the community. Women's movements were restricted to the home and legitimate tasks such as shopping etc to avoid them meeting and mixing with strange men. The Somali community in London has constructed its own rules of behaviour and dress but it was the women who were reinforcing and controlling these rules rather than the men. The Somali women in London set parameters that women must maintain in order to avoid gossip and ostracism. Though certain Somali

men did publicly police Somali women.

Studies have shown how levels of integration into the host community's culture can be affected by the relationships between refugees and their homeland. Somalis identified with their home country, language, religion and culture. This kept them separate from the host community's culture. Many harboured the (unrealistic) hope of returning home. This study found that most second generation British born Somalis were able to move between the two cultures. The young Somalis did not feel completely alienated from British society. This study found it was the newly arrived (in the 1990s) young Somali women with uneducated mothers who were most eager to embrace the host culture. While some of these young women went to the extremes of embracing western culture. Others stayed firmly in the Islamic culture which involved wearing the hijab.

10.3 The Way Forward

Further research could be directed towards the mobility of Somali women students in further/higher education and the routes they take after graduation e.g. types of employment. This research would highlight the reasons for non-completion of courses and the dropout rates. Marriage is one factor but my research found that women were not marrying at younger ages in Britain. The average age for marriage was mid to late twenties for women who undertook further and higher education.

Another issue is to compare the academic achievements of second generation British born and raised women with that of Somali born women who came to Britain as adolescents or young adults. The connection with the education level of their parents could also be explored. In chapter 9 we found that women without formal education prioritised attendance at their Koranic class and despite their low income they would pay for private Koranic tuition for their children. Further research could be undertaken on the types of religious education Somali women attended and whether it improved their literacy and motivated them to attend other education classes.

APPENDIX I Characteristics of the Sample

Number	Name	Age	Marital Status	Education	Occupation
1	Madina	26-33	Married	Koran	Housewife
2	Alia	18-25	Single	Higher	Student
3	Mariam	26-33	Married	Primary	Housewife
4	Hannah	34-41	Married	Primary	Housewife
5	Leyla	Over 50	Married	None	Housewife
6	Amran	18-25	Single	Further	Student
7	Hodan	18-25	Single	Further	Student
8	Yasmine	18-25	Single	Further	Student
9	Filsan	34-41	Married	Higher Education	Community Worker
10	Anisa	18-25	Single	Further	Student
11	Khadija	18-25	Single	Higher	Student
12	Roon	18-25	Single	Primary	Sales Assistant
13	Nuur	18-25	Single	Further	Nurse
14	Farhan	Over 50	Married	None	Housewife
15	Farrah	34-41	Married	Further	Housewife
16	Suleekha	18-25	Single	Further	Student
17	Aisha	Over 50	Married	Adult Education	Housewife
18	Halley	26-33	Married	Further	Student
19	Rahma	34-41	Married	Further	Student
20	Rouhi	34-41	Married	Further	Student
21	Ramla	18-25	Single	Further	Student
22	Suhur	26-33	Married	Secondary	Housewife
23	Khadeer	Over 50	Divorced	Higher	Community Worker
24	Ridwan	34-41	Married	Primary	Housewife

Number	Name	Age	Marital Status	Education	Occupation
25	Hebaaq	16-17	Single	Further	Student
26	Adna	16-17	Single	Further	Student
27	Hamda	26-33	Single	Further	Student
28	Zahra	18-25	Single	Secondary	Student
29	Waris	16-17	Single	Further	Student
30	Asya	26-33	Married	Primary	Housewife
31	Raho	26-33	Divorced	Further	Housewife
32	Sabha	18-25	Married	Primary	Housewife
33	Siyado	26-33	Married	Koran	Housewife
34	Hawo	26-33	Single	Higher	Teacher
35	Fardosa	26-33	Married	Further	Housewife
36	Habiba	16-17	Single	Secondary	Student
37	Heema	42-49	Married	Higher	Community Worker
38	Farida	26-33	Married	Further	Housewife
39	Samiya	34-41	Married	Further	Community Worker
40	Nura	18-25	Single	Higher	Student
41	Hafisa	18-25	Married	Koran	Housewife
42	Halima	26-33	Divorced	Further	Housewife
43	Suad	Over 50	Married	None	Housewife
44	Hibo	34-41	Widow	Primary	Housewife
45	Hinda	34-41	Married	None	Housewife
46	Tia	34-41	Married	Koran	Housewife
47	Tali	42-49	Divorced	Koran	Housewife
48	Muna	26-33	Married	Further	Housewife
49	Zaynab	26-33	Single	Higher	Student
50	Idil	26-33	Married	Further	Housewife

APPENDIX II Somalia - Political History: Independence to Civil War

This section outlines the historical background from colonisation to the civil war.

Colonial intervention in Somalia by Europe started in the mid-nineteenth century. By 1886 Britain had turned Somalia into a protectorate (Lyons and Samatar, 1995). The French colonised French Somaliland known as Djibouti. Somalia was colonised by Britain in the North - British Somaliland and by Italy in the South - Italian Somaliland. Ethnic Somalis are also present in parts of Northern Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia. The Northern and Southern regions of the country were united on July 1 1960 as the Somali Republic.

Somalia's early independence in the 1960s was beset by political problems caused by interclan rivalries and conflicts. Several political parties were formed and the largest was the Somali Youth League (SYL). The SYL was formed in 1945 and it was the first Somali National political organisation (Samatar, 1988). There was corruption in the government and this in turn led to the stagnation of developments in Somalia's economy and infrastructure.

The democratic process was halted when the government was deposed in a bloodless coup by a group of army officers on 21 October 1969. In 1971, the army set up the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) with Major General Mohamed Siad Barre as the Head of State. The new military government in Somalia stated that its political ideology was to be based on Scientific Socialism. The military regime initiated some developmental projects and these included the resettlement of nomadic people. In 1976, the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP) was established to replace the now abolished SRC. The key posts in the new Party were taken over by the members of the SRC (Lewis, 1993).

In the 1970s, the relationship between Somalia and Ethiopia broke down over Somalia's support for the raids carried out by Somali guerrilla fighters in the Ogaden region (part of Ethiopia) who formed the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF). This support for the Ogaden Somalis was made popular by the pan-Somali movement in Somalia. This movement asserted that all neighbouring territories where ethnic Somalis live are part of Greater Somalia. However, these areas had become part of Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti after independence from the colonial powers. The tactical support for the Ogaden

guerrillas was reinforced by skirmishes between the Somali and Ethiopian armies in the mainly Somali region (Lewis, 1993).

Somalia received arms and weapons from the USSR and in return the Soviet Union was allowed to use air and naval bases in Somalia. Somalia is strategically placed as it borders the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden. The co-operation between the Somalis and the Soviets was part of the terms of the treaty of friendship and co-operation. The terms of the treaty were broken when Siad Barre expelled Soviet personnel due to the Soviet Union developing closer ties with Mengistu in Ethiopia; and the Soviets put a moratorium on further arms supplies to Somalia (FitzGibbon, 1982). The switch of allegiances to Ethiopia, the resulting influx of arms, weapons and the support of Cuban troops led to the defeat of Somalia in the Ogaden war in 1978. Siad Barre had then turned to the US for assistance to replace the Soviet Union as its super power ally (Samatar, 1988).

The failure of the abortive coup in April 1978 led to the formation of a guerrilla opposition group based in Ethiopia, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF). The SSDF was set up by former army officers from the Mijertyn (Darod) clan who had taken part in the 1978 coup but had escaped arrest. Clan rivalries were still operative in Somalia despite the efforts of Scientific Socialism to transform traditional clan allegiances. The fragmentation of the Somali Republic was further manifested by the formation of the Somali National Movement (SNM) in 1981, based in the north. The SNM drew most of its popular support from members of the Isaq clans who were united in their opposition to Siad Barre's regime. The SNM operational base was also in Ethiopia and it carried out skirmishes and raids into Somalia. The government retaliated with reprisals in the north. The northern region was underdeveloped with few schools and hospitals and there was growing alienation among the northern Somalis (Drysdale, 1994).

However, the clan rivalries between the Darod (SSDF) and the Isaq (SNM) groups did not enable them to join forces to provide an effective opposition. The government was mainly filled with members of Siad Barre's own family and clan's people - the Marehan. In 1988, Ethiopia and Somalia signed a friendship treaty thereby normalising relations between the two countries and agreeing to stop supporting opposition forces. The Ethiopian government under Mengistu then stopped supporting the SNM and the SSDF.

According to Lewis (1993), this was the catalyst that led the SNM to attack army bases in northern Somalia and thereby trigger the bloody civil war of 1988 - 1991. The civil war was responsible for the displacement of up to half a million people and thousands were injured or killed.

Refugee Crisis

The Somali people underwent a vast upheaval due to the 1977/78 Ogaden war. There was an influx of about 400,000 refugees to camps in Somalia in December 1979, this number doubled within a year. There were also up to half a million refugees living with relatives within Somalia. It came to a stage where one out of every four people in Somalia was a refugee.

The aftermath of the Ogaden war was defeat and a terrible burden on the economy of Somalia. There was also a resurgence of tribalism that Siad Barre was able to exploit and to put one clan against the other. Two major protagonists emerged on the scene, they were two opposition guerrilla movements: the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) and the Somali National Movement (SNM).

The Somali regime retaliated by launching a series of bombing raids and attacks on Hargeisa and other towns in Northern Somalia. The population reacted by a series of demonstrations by school children and youth. Women also joined the demonstrations in Hargeisa (Samatar, 1995). The government made further arbitrary arrests of leading intellectuals and community leaders.

Between 1988-1990 the SNM and the SSDF were united in the common desire to get rid of Siad Barre's unpopular regime. However, clan rivalries prevented the guerrilla groups from continuing into an effective deterrent to the military regime. Siad Barre himself moved to fill the political vacuum caused by the rival groups. In order to negate any potential threat he signed a peace treaty with Ethiopia in 1988. Siad Barre also put members of his family and the Marehan clan in to key positions in the military and security services to further consolidate his grip on power in Somalia. Siad Barre was re-elected President unopposed in 1987, for another seven year period. Ethiopia then withdrew its support from the SSDF and the SNM (Lewis, 1993).

Siad Barre's government went to war against the Isaq's in the north throughout the 1980s. This led to the civil war of 1988-1991 and the subsequent displacement of over one million people. Thousands of people were killed in the war. Hundreds of thousands of people sought refuge across the border in Ethiopia. Many others sought sanctuary in the countryside after their homes were ransacked and looted by the military regime. Some Somali refugees were able to flee to countries in Western Europe, North America, the Gulf and to the Indian Subcontinent (Africa Watch, 1990).

Military bombardment reduced the northern Somali town of Hargeisa to rubble, and destroyed other cities and infrastructure. Repression and insurgency in the north led to the deaths of thousands of people (Sahnoun, 1994). Young men from the Ogaden and other Darod clans were armed and conscripted into Siad Barre's army to fight against the Isaq. With bribes, inducements, threats and corruption the government attempted to broaden its support among non-Isaq based clans. This led to a divide and rule tactic throughout the clan system of the whole Somali nation. The SNM themselves appealed to other clans for support especially the Hawiye clans whose territory includes Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. The tide of the civil war in the north turned in the favour of the SNM, whose forces defeated the government side in the north in January 1991.

Other guerrilla movements were formed. The main ones were the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) in 1989 formed by Ogadeni people. It joined the United Somali Congress (USC) which is a Hawiye based group and other disaffected groups to fight Siad Barre's forces. It was General Aideed who was the USC militia commander and his forces that pursued Siad Barre as he fled Mogadishu on 26 January 1991. The interclan bloodbath was accelerated when Siad Barre urged the Darod in Mogadishu to kill the Hawiye clans' people. Siad Barre finally bombed the Hawiye section of the city - and he was forced to flee the city in 1991.

An interim government headed by Ali Mahdi of the USC-Abgal was set up while the USC¹-Aideed led group was busy pursuing Siad Barre. The two USC clans became embroiled in internal strife between Ali Mahdi and Aideed which later led to an uneasy

¹the USC has 2 factions the Abgal and the Habar Gidir

peace in 1991, with Aideed elected chairman and Ali Mahdi continuing as interim President (Drysdale, 1994).

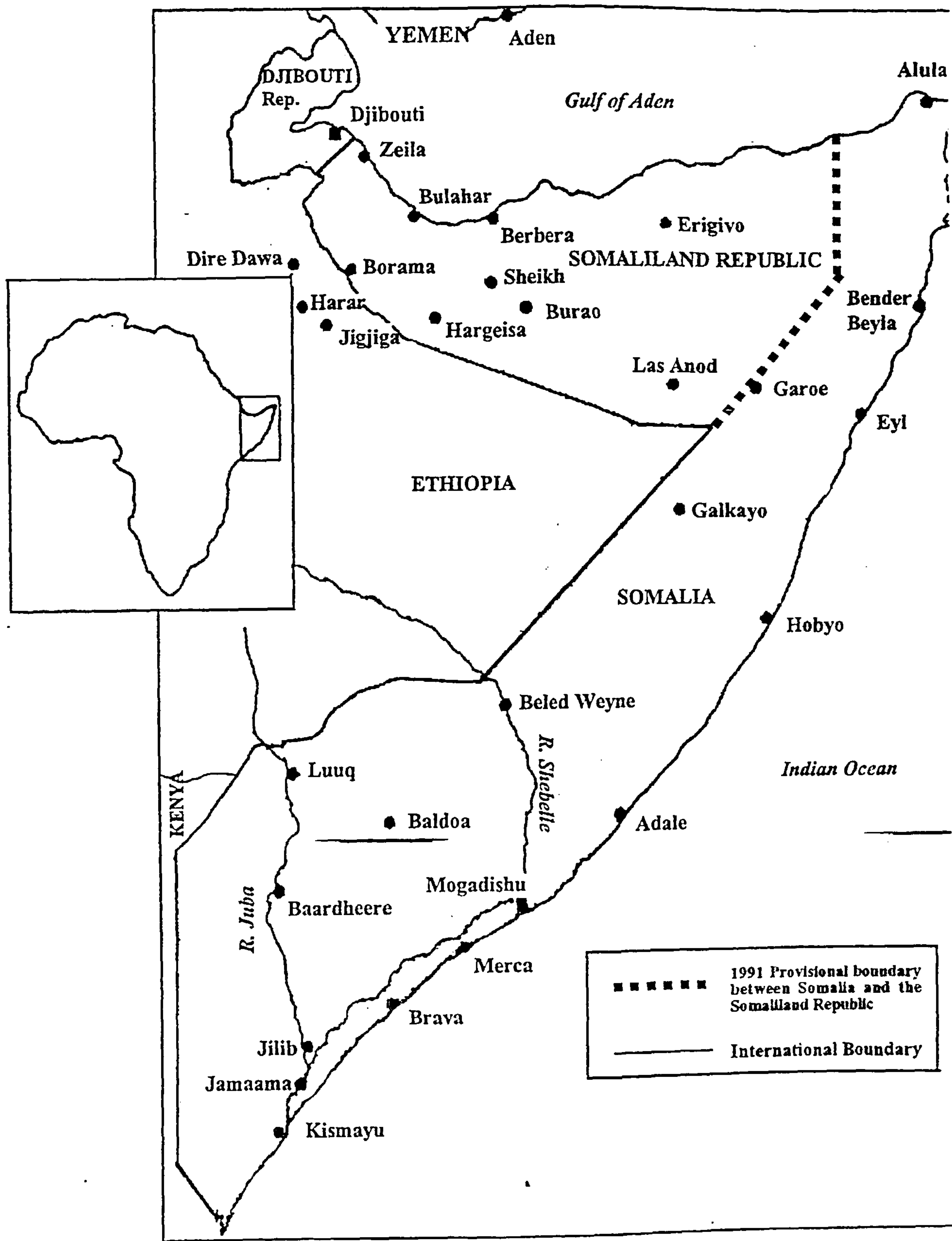
Siad Barre and his supporters fled to his clan territory, where he formed the Somali National Front (SNF), based on the Marehan clan support, with calls to the Darod clan to mobilise against the USC. There were bouts of heavy fighting and skirmishes, which ended up with the capital Mogadishu being divided into 2 USC areas. The civilian casualties of these clan battles were occurring on an unprecedented scale, with anarchy reigning supreme and various militia factions controlling different patches. Siad Barre went to Nigeria where he died in exile there on 2 January 1995 (Samatar, 1995).

Fighting has continued in Southern Somalia with intermittent skirmishes between the various militia forces that control different areas of Mogadishu. In 1991, by which time famine, fighting and anarchy prevailed in Somalia, the United Nations intervened in the form of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM). UNOSOM I (Dec 1992-March 1993) helped provide humanitarian relief and their remit further extended under UNOSOM II (May 1993-March 1995) to economic rehabilitation and to promote political reconciliation. The UNOSOM II mission failed in its attempts to resolve conflicts among the various warring factions and there were disputes within UNOSOM too (Samatar, 1995).

APPENDIX III Glossary

1. Aroos – wedding reception
2. Aqal Gal – living together after marriage
3. Dibaad - Gifts given during the meher from the bride's family to the suitor and his family
4. Dumaal – When a widow marries her late husband's brother
5. Gabaati – Gifts given to the elders representing the bride's parents during the meher ceremony
6. Hadith – traditions and sayings of Prophet Mohammed
7. Hagbad – Financial savings co-operatives run by Somali women
8. Hijab – Headscarf worn by Muslim women
9. Khat - a shrub of East Africa, Arabia etc, the leaves are chewed or taken as tea for its stimulant effect
10. Masafo - Elopement
11. Meher- Official Islamic wedding ceremony and amount of money pledged by the bridegroom to the bride as part of the marriage contract. The meher is given to the wife during a divorce.
12. Mugmad – Diced camel meat cooked in spices and preserved in ghee and dates
13. Wadaad – a sheikh, man knowledgeable in the Islamic religion
14. Yarad – Bride wealth given by the groom's family to the bride before she moves to her husband's house.
15. Shukansi - flirtation

APPENDIX IV Map Of Somalia



SOMALIA

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